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292 Pages Packed with videogame news

NEXT GENERATION

Leading edge computer and video games PRESENTS December 1996

THE BIG FIGHT!

Nintendo 64

VS VS

PlayStation

Sega Saturn

Which videogame system is the best? Which console should *you* buy? PlayStation, Saturn, and Nintendo 64 each claims to be number one. But which packs the hardest gaming punch? And which console will really go the distance? The gloves come off on page 38...

volume two

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LET'S GET READY TO

RUMBLE!

The PC and Mac are great game machines, but the dedicated gamer often feels obligated to bolster his set-up with a game console. Of course, the big question is "Which one?" The good news is that this month's CD is packed with over 600MB of game demos and previews — information to make your final decision a more informed, rational choice.

As long as there is no unified format for videogame playing, choosing which to buy will be tough. Obviously, it's all about playing the hottest games. But when buying a new videogame system, you need to be sure that it will not only meet your gaming needs today, but also tomorrow — and for years to come. The road videogaming has taken to the 64-bit and 32-bit superconsoles of 1996 is littered with the burned-out husks of consoles that couldn't go the distance. Just ask anyone who bought a 3DO Multiplayer, Atari Jaguar, Virtual Boy, or TurboGrafx16.

So in picking a new machine, gamers need to understand the business issues that can lead to a machine's success or failure. Questions that gamers must ask include: What's under the hood? Where did it come from? How committed is the manufacturer to its console's success? How many have been sold already? How is the console being marketed? Have games on this system gotten as good as they're going to get, or will they continue to improve?

All the data you need to make an informed decision begins on page 38.

NEXT GENERATION

NEXT GENERATION

December 1996

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Did You Know that Sega was Founded by an American?
It's true. The Japanese gaming giant was actually the brainchild of David Rosen, an American ex-airman trying to make a living after the Korean War. This is his story

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Atari's Historic Road to Nowhere
Atari is dead. Now Don Thomas, the former "Voice of Atari," tells the insider's story of the death of the American company that first started the videogame ball bouncing

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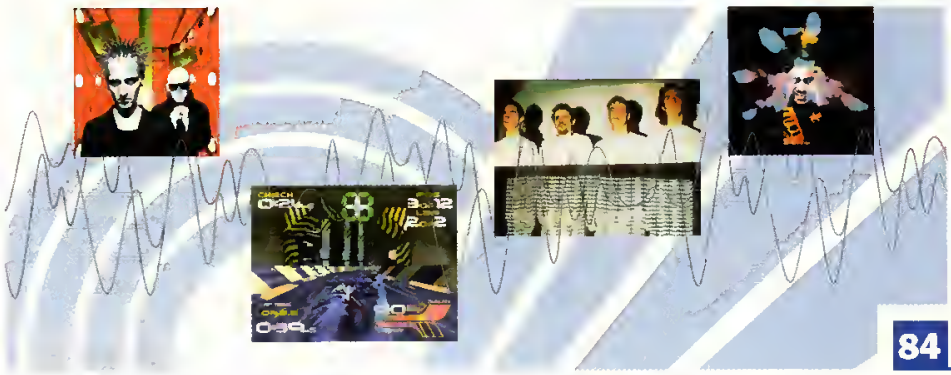
The Big Fight — Nintendo 64 vs PlayStation vs Sega Saturn
Which console is really the best? Which system should *you* buy? With all three heavyweights finally in the ring, this holiday season will witness the most important battle the game industry has ever fought. **NG** steps in to referee



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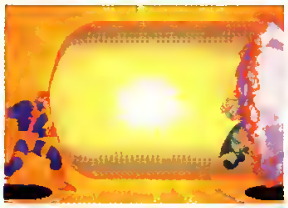

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EVERYTHING ELSE TAKES A BACKSEAT.

PlayStation

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Photography Mark Koehler

All videogame players know that Sega, like Nintendo and Sony, is a Japanese company. But very few people know that Sega was founded by an American ex-Airman who found himself in Japan in the early 1950s, after the Korean War.

Rosen's story would still be interesting if it was only about establishing Sega as a world power in videogames. Instead, Rosen's story is intertwined with Japan's. And the rise of Sega mirrors the recovery of Japan from the economic mess it found itself in after World War II.

Rosen is still co-Chairman of Sega Enterprises, and yet a private man with no desire for publicity — he seldom meets with the press. However, he agreed to meet with **Next Generation** to discuss Sega's legacy as an entertainment empire.

Sega photo booths?

NG: How did you get started in Japan?

David: From 1949 to 1952, during the Korean War, I was in the U.S. Air Force, and I travelled around. I started in Shanghai in China, I was in Korea during the war, but most of my time was spent in Japan. After the war, I started a company in Japan called Rosen Enterprises Ltd. This first business actually involved art — which is about as far from the current business as you could be.

At that point in time, the Japanese had a great need for ID photos. You needed an ID photo for school applications, for rice ration cards, for railway cards, and for employment. My idea was to adapt and import those little automated photo booths from the U.S. to Japan.

NG: Was the Japanese government as anti foreign business then as it has become since?

David: I don't think Japan's ever really been anti foreign business — then or now.

NG: But was it difficult to expand your business?

David: You would go crazy with the regulations imposed upon businesses! But I don't think they necessarily targeted foreigners.

In the years after World War II, Japan had no dollars — unlike today. So if you wanted to import any product into Japan [and hence spend dollars], you needed a license. And that license application went through MITI (Ministry of Industrial Trade and Industry). It didn't matter if you were Japanese or any other nationality, you could not import anything without a license.

Licenses generally fell into three categories. Category one was absolute necessities. Category two was products that were non-necessities but desirable. And category three was luxury — and getting a luxury license was nearly impossible.

NG: So how did you start importing videogames? Surely amusements were "luxury" goods?

David: Geographically Japan is very close to Korea. During the Korean War, Japan benefited from some U.S. military procurement [the U.S. army bought supplies in Japan]. This was a big bolster to the Japanese economy.

So around '56 or '57, I recognized that there was starting to be some disposable income. Also, there was beginning to be a little time for entertainment. By this I mean, up until perhaps the mid '50s, most Japanese companies worked a full six days a week. In smaller companies, it wouldn't be unusual to work six and a half days, which didn't leave you much time for leisure. You were fortunate to get a good night's sleep.

But when the first signs of disposable income and leisure time appeared, I began thinking about how I could enter the entertainment market.

"The U.S. game business was suffering. So we decided that to survive in Japan, we should develop games of our own"

NG: How did you choose coin-op amusements?

David: By a method of elimination. The popular entertainment at that point in time in Japan was Pachinko, dance studios, bars, and cabarets. None of these were something I wanted to get involved in, so I thought, "Gee — coin-operated games."

NG: So how did you get started?

David: I made a quick study of the industry and found that there was only a small number of coin-op manufacturers and they were all in Chicago. They each manufactured between four and six games a year, other than pinballs.

At the time, it was pretty much a dying industry in the U.S. — dying in the sense that it wasn't growing. So I came to the U.S. with the idea that I would seek out the type of games that I felt most suitable for Japan. Then I went back to MITI to try and obtain a license to import them.

David Rosen still has time to play the Sega classics at his home in Beverly Hills, California

NG: But coin-ops are luxury entertainment items — not "necessity" photo booths.

David: Yes, these were luxury items, and it took me over one year with a lot of effort — and certainly a lot of introductions — to convince MITI that coin-ops would be good for leisure. Finally, they granted me a license for $100,000, which meant I could purchase $100,000 worth of coin-ops, and bring them to Japan.

The Japanese had a real desire for hunting and shooting, so I brought from the U.S. an assortment of rifle games based on this $100,000 limitation. The average game probably only cost me about $200 used, but the import duties in Japan were like 200%. Worse yet, you had to pay duties on shipping costs too.

NG: So it was costing you around $800 for a machine that sold in the U.S. for $200. But the cost was worth it?

David: Right off the bat, the machines were tremendously successful. It's embarrassing to say this, but the return generally came in less than two months.

The profits of a machine are made the same way as the profits of a theater seat or a plane seat — it depends on occupancy and on the time it's used. You can charge a dollar to play a machine, but if it's only used 10 times a day, you only make $10. Our machines were constantly going — from morning to night. So the return was excellent.

NG: And so you imported more?

David: I became known as a very live customer in the U.S. because most distributors had warehouses filled with used equipment they had no marketplace for. In those days, trade-ins were a very big part of any distributor's business — when an operator bought a game for around $700, two years later he would trade it in for just $50 or $100. And these trade-ins were just piled up in warehouses.

NG: And the Japanese loved these old games?

David: The air gun games were in big supply and yet very popular in Japan. We were stripping the cabinets off the old machines, just keeping the mechanisms and creating new jungle environments from scratch.

The first Japanese arcades

NG: So where were you putting these coin-ops?

David: At this point, I was opening up arcades with these shooting and hunting games throughout Japan, and we were fortunate.

Based on my initial Photorama experience, we worked out a very good relationship with various movie studios, primarily Toho and Shursheko, so they made their locations available to us.

NG: How many arcades did you have?

David: I don't know, but when I left there wasn't a city in Japan that didn't have one of our arcades.

NG: Several Japanese game companies have told of run-ins with the Yakuza — the Japanese mafia. Was this ever a problem for you?

David: It was probably less of a problem for us than it was for others. Actually, it was never a problem for us.

NG: Really? Do you think you were left alone because you were American?

David: Oh, definitely. Once, when we didn't know any better, we opened a Photorama booth in an area of Tokyo called Iraksho. What we didn't realize was that one has to pay their respects to the local... uh... call them what you will. I hesitate to come up with a name.

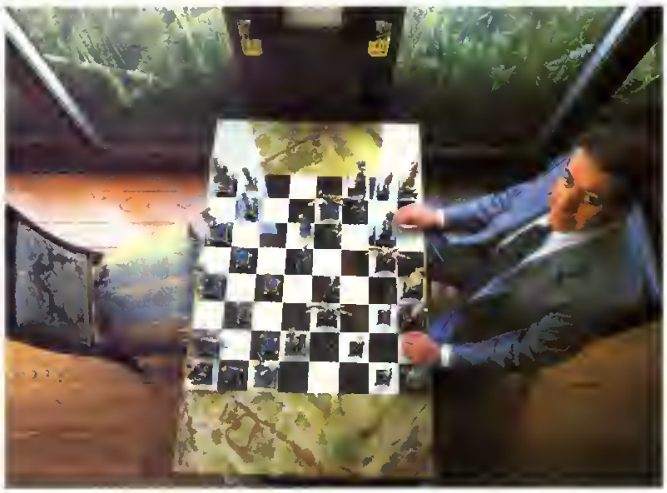
But you're supposed to pay your respects and acknowledge that you are now doing this business in their, erm, domain. And we didn't. We failed to do this, just out of ignorance.

In this particular case, we didn't realize that this particular party was so sensitive to the issue. He sent some emissaries to tell us of his displeasure. And so we made an apology, and one of our Japanese managers explained to him that we were, of course, a foreign company and very sorry we didn't know better.

NG: Were you the only person in Japan operating coin-op games?

David: I probably had the civilian marketplace to myself for about two years, but then other companies learned how we were importing and under what classification. Obviously, they applied for a similar license and soon started to import games and became competitors.

The two companies that were most involved were Taito and a company called Service Games



Rosen remains one of the few Americans to build a business empire in Japan

— the Japanese name was Nihon Goraku Bussan.

NG: And these became major competitors?

David: Both companies had a fair sized jukebox operation going, and Nihon Goraku Bussan had a factory that manufactured slot machines for military use. So they were powerful companies.

In the early '60s, I was friends with the principals of both Taito and Nihon Goraku Bussan. And in 1964 going into 196S, the principals of Nihon Goraku Bussan and I had discussions about merging. They were by far the larger company, and Sega was their brand name.

NG: So Nihon Goraku was the original Sega?

David: It was Sega in the sense that Sega was its brand name.

But we had decided to merge, and in trying to establish the name of the company, we decided Sega was the best known name, and we took Enterprises from Rosen Enterprises. So our new company became known as Sega Enterprises Ltd, and I became CEO/President after the merger.

Sega's first coin-ops

NG: When did Sega start making its own games?

David: By 1961, we noticed that there really wasn't anything new about the games we were importing. There were cosmetic changes — the target or the layout would be different — but basically the games were all the same.

The game business back in the U.S. was going further into the doldrums. So we decided that to survive in Japan, we should think of developing some new equipment of our own.

Sega Enterprises had the factory and the engineers, from Nihon Goraku Bussan. I had engineers too, of course, and I had some game ideas. We decided to seize the opportunity.

NG: So what was the first true "Sega" game?

David: In 1966, we produced our first game called *The Periscope*. Old-timers in the industry will tell you that *The Periscope* was a turning point for coin-ops. It was a simple game. You stood at one end and shot at cutout ships running on a chain through a periscope.

NG: Kind of like ducks on a shooting gallery?

David: Something like that. The aiming device looked like a real periscope and the player had to release torpedoes in time to hit the ships. It sounds simple today, but at the time it was somewhat revolutionary.

It was so successful that US. and European distributors flew to Japan to see what it was all about, and we exported it.

NG: Was it just as expensive to export from Japan as it was to import into it?

David: Because of the Japanese export tax, *The Periscope* was about twice as expensive as any conventional U.S. piece. Instead of $69S or $79S, it cost around $1,29S. The operators complained, saying, "You know it's a great piece, but we really can't make money paying $1,29S." And we said, "Put it on 2S¢ play, and you'll make money."

That was the introduction of 2S¢ play in the U.S. and Sega's start in the export business.

NG: So what happened next?

David: After *The Periscope*, we realized that we could design acceptable games, and we became very prolific — we probably designed and exported between eight to ten games a year.

"The Japanese had a great need for ID photos. My first idea was to import automated photo booths from the U.S."

For the first time, Chicago realized: one, that there was somebody outside of Chicago that could produce games; and two, that there was still a good industry out there if one really produced games that could attract player attention.

NG: Did the Chicago companies fight back?

David: The game that broke the camel's back, so to speak, was a game we built in the late 1960s called *Jet Rocket*. Word got out about this game.

Every game Sega Enterprises introduced was really novel, but *Jet Rocket* introduced a lot of new elements, different types of sound, and different special effects. While we were designing it, we obviously showed prototypes to various people and sent out prototypes for testing. This was going to be an expensive piece.

But unbeknownst to us, the three main Chicago manufacturers decided to knock off this game [make an exact copy of it] and each one was racing to be first. Consequently, there was an over supply of *Jet Rocket*, and for a while we stopped exporting games.

NG: Sega was eventually bought by the Gulf/Western conglomerate. How did this happen?

David: We wanted to go public in Japan, but too many firsts were involved. First, it would have been the first time a foreign-owned company went public in Japan after World War II. Second, it would have been the first time a company in the coin-op industry went public in Japan. Too many hurdles existed.

So we ended up being bought by the Gulf/Western conglomerate. And then, in March of 1984, I put together a group — including Mr. Nakayama — and bought the company back.

"Unfortunately, the Master System was launched around two years after the NES. By that time, Japan had a Nintendo culture"

The first Sega videogames

NG: At what point did Sega get involved with actual videogames, as opposed to coin-operated electro-mechanical games?

David: Sega was involved in videogames very shortly after they were invented. Certainly we were importing games like *Pong* from day one.

We started producing our own videogames shortly thereafter.

NG: After having enjoyed so much success in Japanese arcades, why was Sega's first home videogame system — the Master System — unable to get a foothold in Japan?

David: Unfortunately, the Master System was launched around two years after Nintendo's NES. By that time Japan had a Nintendo culture, and it was difficult to launch a similar technology.

NG: Do you believe that the Master System offered more powerful hardware than the NES?

David: Well, I don't think there was a significant difference, in all fairness.

NG: But you made up for this slow start with the launch of the 16-bit Genesis?

David: Yes, we were first with the Genesis. And that's what helped us recapture the market.

NG: But Saturn has not done as well as people had hoped, obviously.

David: Saturn is very successful in Japan.

Basically, Saturn has done remarkably well considering the forces against it. There's no question that Sony is a very viable competitor. And there's also no question that a lot of third-parties have jumped on the Sony bandwagon.

In spite of this, however, Sega has held its own in Japan very well. To the best of my knowledge and based on the numbers I receive, it was still a 50/50 market in Japan, prior to the launch of Nintendo 64. That is I think quite an achievement. It says quite a bit about Saturn.

NG: What about in the U.S.?

David: By most reports, Sony has outsold Sega in the U.S., but several factors are involved. First, they were priced less than us to begin with — and the market is unquestionably price-sensitive. Second, Sony was fortunate to have a lot of software when they introduced their system. We didn't have quite as much.

NG: Many Sega followers are hoping that *Nights* can do for Saturn what *Sonic the Hedgehog* did for Genesis. What do you think of the game?

David: I think it's a very impressive game.

Sega has tremendous engineering and technology capability. Basically, due to the coin-op business we have the ability to translate and transpose our engineering know-how into consumer product.

Certainly, I would say Sega's strength is its engineering R & D capability, which comes out of the coin-operated machine business. Sometimes we become overly sophisticated and think anybody can understand the operating system and thereby program and make great software for it. But that rectifies itself in time.

NG: So you have long-term faith in Saturn?

David: I think that this bout is far from over.

A lot will depend on what happens this holiday season, and a lot of what happens this holiday season is going to depend on the software. Certainly, the two 32-bit systems are not dissimilar enough to sell on the virtue of the hardware.

Customers buy based on the games they've played and how much they enjoy them. So we hope that a lot of titles that we have coming out will put us back on top.

Rosen remains co-Chairman of Sega Enterprises, the Japanese parent company of all things Sega

WARNING: There are those who may think you're having a little too much fun playing our games.

If you find yourself having so much fun playing our games that you've begun to neglect a few of life's little obligations, we understand. After all, totally absorbing gameplay is what we built our reputation on. Bear in mind, however, there are those who may not be so understanding.

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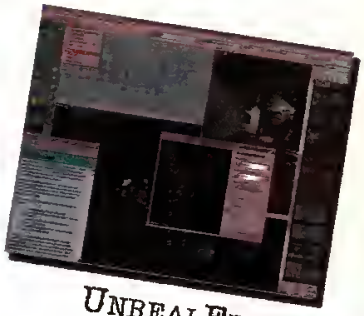

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Next Generation attends Japan's biggest videogame exhibition and discovers a wealth of 32-bit games and third-party Nintendo 64 games/**p.14** • **JAMMA:** yet more new coin-ops/**p.20** • **Arcadia:** How Microsoft has its sights set on the coin-op world/**p.24** • **Generator:** Force Feedback/**p.26** • **JoyRiding:** Online gaming/**p.30**

Computer and videogame news from around the world

Tokyo **Game Show '96:** Japan shows off

Japan's premiere videogame show offers first look at Sony, Sega, and Nintendo games

The Tokyo Game Show took place recently in the new Big Sight suburb of the capital – an area reclaimed from the sea and quickly developed by the space-hungry Japanese. The popularity of the show was demonstrated by the 45 minute wait to buy tickets for the only train from Tokyo to Big Sight. On arrival, visitors had to suffer another lengthy delay as thousands lined up to get into the venue. (The visitors included over a thousand people dressed as game characters, in full costume for the Saturday parade run by the show's organizers.)

What all these visitors came to see were the 350 or so games presented on seven different platforms. The numbers tell the story of the state of the play in the Japanese market with the PlayStation leading the way with 164 titles on show. The numbers were made up by 110 Saturn titles, 29 PC titles, 14 Nintendo 64 titles, 10 NEC PC-FX titles, 9 Macintosh titles, and a solitary PC Engine game.

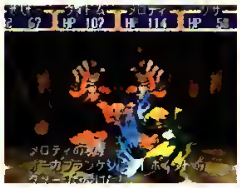
What all these visitors came to see were the 350 or so games presented on seven different platforms

The excitement shown on the faces of delegates was clear — this was a show that few owners of next-gen machines were prepared to miss

At Sony's big and impressive stand, SCE debuted *Beldeselva* and *Rorokenshin*. *Beldeselva* is an air combat game set in a fantasy world in which pilots fly a bizarre collection of propeller-driven aircraft. Like Sega's *Virtual-On*, a special analogue double joystick will be released for the game.

Sega gives it some stick

The dual-stick control method adopted by the arcade version of *Virtual-On* has prompted Sega to develop a version for the Saturn. No news has been released on a price or whether it will make it to the U.S.



Sega's booth was unsurprisingly crowded with game players eager to check out Saturn titles such as *Shining the Holy Ark* (above and above right) — the latest RPG in its highly popular series

Rorokenshin is a sword-fighting game similar to *Bushido Blade* but, at this stage, not so visually impressive.

PaRappa The Rapper was possibly the strangest — and perhaps even the most fun — title on show. It's billed as a children's game with a main character designed by cartoonist Rodney Greenblat. The player simply has to copy the ever-more complex "rap" moves of characters such as karate sensei Professor Onion.

The other major title at the Sony stand was Zen's new-agey dolphin game, *Depth*. In it, the player steers a dolphin through a very pretty seascape collecting musical notes, composing his own soundtrack along the way. Filling out the booth were the still to be released *Ark The Lad 2*, *Wild Arms*, and the popular *Total NBA*.

Sega showed off its Saturn version of *Fighting Vipers* to an eager audience, just a week prior to the game's Japanese launch. But the big news was *Virtual-On* with its special dual joystick (reminiscent of Atari's old *Battlezone* arcade controls). The standard version of the robot combat game only offers a one-player mode, but X-Band players should soon be able to hook up for two-player battles.

Sega also unveiled *Shining the Holy Ark*, a 3D role-player in the *Shining* series, and *Daytona USA Championship Circuit Edition*, a redesign by the Saturn *Sega Rally* team running at 30 fps with a split-screen two-player mode, replays, and a ghost car mode. Elsewhere, the action-packed Saturn *Die Hard* was up and running and third-party titles included *Riglord Saga 2*, *Heart Of Darkness*, *Dark Savior*, and *Sakura Taisen*.

What is it?

It is a hexagonal frame that is placed on the floor and plugged into the joypad port of a Genesis. In theory, you can now "control" a game using body movements. In reality though, you can't

Capcom did introduce *Resident Evil 2* at the show but remained cagey about the content of the game and only played the demo on two small screens at the back of its booth. It was more upfront about *Star Gladiator* and *Street Fighter Alpha 2*, both of which are reviewed this issue.

The biggest attraction on Konami's stand was the 3D RPG, *Vandal Hearts*, although the company continues to milk *Parodius* for all it's

Capcom's *Star Gladiator* was popular on PlayStation, but its showing of *Resident Evil 2* on video (top) was torture for fans of the original

Namco's star attractions were its new racing game (above) and *Soul Edge*

breaking

worth with two variants — *Sexy Parodius* and *Oshaberi Parodius* (Forever With Me) for PlayStation and Saturn. *Tokimeki Memorial* — a title based on a sexy young Manga idol — was also there and has been a huge success on PlayStation, Saturn, and Super Famicom in Japan.

Warp's decidedly un-Japanese way of doing things again provided welcome relief from stand after stand of identikit "spokesmodels." Moments after the show opened, with just a handful of visitors at its booth, Warp ran a video showing boss Kenji Eno and Warp staffers dancing and singing a song. The lyrics translated roughly as "*EO* is a good game, Warp is a good company," and after the song, when Eno was handed a Sony-branded MuuMuu mascot doll, he immediately threw it to the floor. (Eno and Warp's very public snubbing of Sony at a recent PlayStation Expo ruffled many feathers in stuffy corporate Japan, adding to Eno's reputation as something of a renegade.) Eno also appeared in person throughout the show, playing a piano and introducing some of Warp's artists.

Namco made a much stronger showing than at recent expos, introducing two major new PlayStation titles — Soul *Edge* and an as yet unnamed racing game, along with a six-button fighting stick.

It was no surprise that the conversion of Soul *Edge* differs little from the System 11 arcade original, so most people crowding around the big screens at the Namco stand were focused on the mysterious racer. It's a completely redesigned *Ridge Racer* follow-up, featuring a new *Grand Prix* mode in which players earn money to buy upgrades for their cars. The standard *Ridge Racer* controls remain in place, but apparently the driving will be "more technical," with some shrewd gear-changing required on the undulating circuits. *Namco Museum Volume 4* was also displayed — according to the company, over 600,000 units of the *Museum* senes had been sold in Japan to date. So, retrogaming obviously pays...

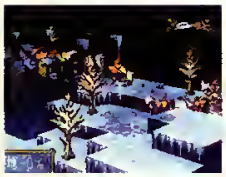
Square gave more demos of the long-awaited *Final Fantasy VII* and gave away a CD-ROM graphics demo. Other demos running on the Square stand were *Final Fantasy Tactics*, *Bushido Blade*, and *Saga Frontier*. Takara showed the latest titles in the *Toshinden* series — *Nitoushinden* and *Toshinden Ura* — as well as *Deep Sea Adventure*.

Taito had the PlayStation version of its shooter *Ray Storm* demoing on a huge screen that dwarfed their other major demos — the promising 3D fighter *Psychic Force* and a redesigned PlayStation *Ray Tracer*.

Elsewhere, Banpresto had classic Toaplan shooter *Batsugun* on the Saturn and two PlayStation games —

It is...

Sega's Activator. This ill-fated peripheral failed for many reasons, but primarily because many players found it impossible to even start a game using this wacky device — let alone break any high scores



Konami's *Vandal Hearts* (top), and SCE's *Rorokenshin* (above), both for PlayStation

Square's *Final Fantasy VII* previews attracted huge crowds of expectant RPG fans, despite its delay. The company also premiered *Bushido Blade*

Taito's stand let gamers get to grips with PlayStation titles *Ray Storm*, *Psychic Force*. Namco's *PowerVR Rave Racer* (left)

Nintendo 64

There was no official Nintendo presence at the show, but some new N64 games were given public airings by third parties. Epoch's *Doraemon* demo betrayed a strong *Mario 64* influences with camera views, playing techniques, and a boss stage very similar to the Miyamoto opus. Enix's N64 role-player, *Wonder Project J2*, is a follow-up to the Super NES original, and roughly follows the format of the 16-bit game. Seta had no less than three N64 games — combat flight sim, *Wild Choppers*, racer *Rev Limit* (looking extremely smooth), and *Ekoo-no-Saint Andrews*, a golf sim set at the Scottish "home" of golf and designed to work with analogue controls.

One of SCE's best titles was *Beldeselva* — a fantasy flight sim with some crazy airplanes. The game is compatible with a custom duel-handled 'stick

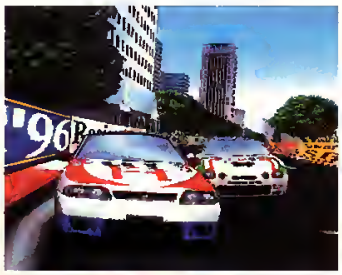
Warp's Kenji Eno continued to ruffle Sony feathers by throwing a MuuMeu doll on the floor. He then played the piano and introduced Warp's artists

Epoch made an appearance with its *Mario 64*-like *Doraemon* game for Nintendo 64

Zeraim Zone and 3D fighter *Shadow Struggle*. Other PlayStation titles on display included a *Formula 1* racer from OZ Club, although Human's *Formula 1: The Next Generation* failed to appear as expected. Human did, however, present *Tower Clock 2*, a horror title for Sony's machine.

The number of videogame shows is increasing at an alarming rate, proof of just how much activity the next generation market is generating. With E3 Tokyo scheduled for early November and Shoshinkai looming, expect **Next Generation** to be busy...

ng



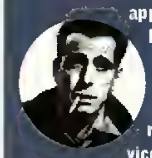
Seta's range of new Nintendo 64 games kept onlookers preoccupied. *Rev Limit* (top) was by far the most impressive

In the studio

Games in development around the world: The announcements, the delays, the good, the bad, the ugly...

Vic Tokai has announced the date for release of its Nintendo 64 3D fighter. *Dark Rift* has been penciled in for launch in April '97, one month after the title appears on PC. It is also planning to release the mysterious *Wet Corpse* at the same time.

Old-time movie star Humphrey Bogart is to star in a videogame, courtesy of CMG. The actor, who died more than 30 years ago, will appear in *Into The Fire*, which aims to emulate the look and feel of film noir classics. Bogart himself has been brought to life via digitized images from old screen tests and photos of the star.



"Bogart remains one of the century's most recognizable figures," explained Beth Vahle, CMG's vice president. "His legendary tough-guy image makes him the perfect leading man."

Namco has confirmed its first two games for Nintendo 64. As widely expected, an RPG is in the offering — probably a sequel in the *Tales of Phantasia* series. Both Namco and Nintendo are hoping the RPG will fill the gap left by PlayStation defector Square. A Namco's spokesperson told *n64.com* (*NG Online*'s sister site, dedicated to Nintendo 64 coverage) that the second game would be sports based and part of the company's World Stadium brand. Currently, the brand is only being used for the PlayStation baseball title *World Stadium EX*.

Square has announced that the much-anticipated *Final Fantasy 7* for PlayStation has been delayed. On Square's web page, the company explained that the title has been delayed until January 31.

Trilobyte (the maker of *7th Guest*) is working on its own online gaming world for *Assault*, a new mission-based combat game, due to be launched next spring. *Assault* will come out under Trilobyte's new Analogue label, and will be a military strategy game, but not — according to its maker — "just another *Warcraft II* clone."

Spectrum Holobyte has secured the rights to produce an action game based upon the forthcoming *Star Trek: First Contact* movie. In the movie *Star Trek: First Contact* the Next Generation crew (of the Trek, not videogame magazine, variety — although we are available for game and movie deals, if Spectrum's interested) encounters the Borg collective for the first time.

The game itself will be in the form of a 3D action/strategy game that will take place entirely on the Enterprise-E. In the game, the Borg takeover of the Enterprise has begun, and players must incapacitate the Borg — a task that will lead to an encounter with the evil Borg Queen herself.

Sources close to Sega have indicated that a compilation disc of *Thunderforce* will be released in Japan for the Saturn. The collection, called *Thunderforce Gold*, will included such classic as *Thunderforce 2* and *Thunderforce 3*. Additional sources indicate that it may also include *Lightning Force*.

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Online gaming via Nintendo 64DD?

Nintendo finally acknowledges that Nintendo 64's disk drive add-on may be a Trojan Horse for online gaming

64DD — Nintendo's 32X? Or the device that enables online gaming?

Nintendo has finally released final specifications for 64DD, the readable/writable magnetic disk drive add-on for Nintendo 64. The drive is scheduled to be released at Tokyo's Shoshinkai exposition this November and to hit Japanese streets in the fall of 1997. Nintendo has revealed that 64DD attaches to the underside of a Nintendo 64 console through the "ext" port. High density 3 3/4" magnetic disks are front-loaded (VCR-style) into the unit, and each disk holds 64MB of data (44MB of each disk will be read-only, with 20MB writable). 64DD boasts an Average Seek Time (AST) of 150 milliseconds and then a 1MB per second Data Transfer Rate (DTR). The unit will come with a 1MB or 2MB RAM expansion pack (to be plugged into N64's memory expansion slot) to extend the memory capacity of both the disks and the cartridges from the standard 4MB. There is no firm news of what games will appear on 64DD.

The addition of such a device to Nintendo 64 offers huge potential for enhanced gameplay. The convenience of swapping disks with friends, the ability to save sophisticated game data, and the sheer increased amount of RAM all look to turbocharge what is already a powerful system. But perhaps the most exciting possibility, as **NG** has discussed before, is the potential to use 64DD as a means of hooking an N64 to an online network. Downloadable software, multiplayer gaming, customizable levels — the possibilities are endless.

Up until now, however, Nintendo has refused to comment on the subject. The closest it has ever come to admitting that it has plans in place to introduce such a service came in **NG 20** when Howard Lincoln, upon being presented with the online possibilities 64DD offers, smiled and conceded, "That's a very astute observation. And everything you've said I completely agree with. But, without trying to be overly coy about this, we just are not in a position where we can make an announcement."

However, some of **Next Generation**'s readers have recently e-mailed Nintendo, inquiring about 64DD and have received confirmation that such an online network may be in its plans. "By far the most significant fact about the 64DD is that it can be written to, not just read from," offered a Nintendo spokesperson. And then, "uses may include ... a means to download games and programs from network or satellite sources. Think about some of the possibilities."

Additionally, Paradigm Simulations (the co-developers of *PilotWings 64*) has confirmed that it is "actively pursuing Internet gaming" — and this has to be in conjunction with Nintendo. Consider that Nintendo has been toying with satellite and terrestrial gaming networks in Japan for years, while Nintendo of America's GateWay system distributes Nintendo games via a network in hotels and on airplanes across the country. Remember that a "strategic alliance" with Netscape was announced last year. Lastly, realize that for all its bluster, Nintendo understands the limitations of cartridges as well as anyone else and would welcome a viable alternative (downloaded games are even cheaper to "make" than CD-ROMs — they're free). Isn't it fairly easy to see a pattern emerging? ng

Howard Lincoln, not wishing to be overly coy about Nintendo's plans, yesterday

Nintendo's Magic Trick

To nobody's great surprise, Nintendo has magically produced 450,000 extra Nintendo 64s for the U.S. prompting retailers to up their targets for Nintendo 64 this holiday season to "a minimum of 1.5 million units." Previously, Nintendo promoted the idea of a shortage, warning gamers that only 500,000 Nintendo 64s would reach U.S. stores for the holiday season. In reality, additional hardware is arriving to match demand.

Nintendo claims the new units are available as a result of a (presumably unexpected) "more efficient manufacturing process." This, obviously, is a fallacy and — as previously suggested by Next Generation — the perception of a shortage was clearly a marketing gimmick. Nintendo vehemently denies the possibility that N64 is still underachieving in Japan and that the U.S. is picking up the unsold machines.

NG Online

http://www.next-generation.com/

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- Play the newest demos for PC and Macintosh. *NG Online* doesn't waste time with trash. All our demos are hand-picked by the team.
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- Ask your gaming questions to **Next Generation**'s editors. Every day, your queries are answered in a special Q&A.
- During November and December, there will be a series of live online conferences on the Palace. We'll be inviting top industry insiders and game designers to answer your questions.

NG OnLine is one of the fastest growing sites on the web. So, if you're interested in games, we'll see you there. And don't forget our brand new sister-site *N64.com*

Jamma '96: Konami and Capcom gain ground

Sega and Namco's stranglehold on the world coin-op market shows signs of loosening

No real surprises occurred during this year's JAMMA show, which took place in mid-September. Namco's System 33 failed to show despite its main rival Sega having already kick-started the future of real-time 3D with *Virtua Fighter 3* hogging most of the attention on the show floor.

Capcom's *CP System III* board will offer untold 2D power. Its first game will be *Warzard* (top)

Konami and Capcom fared better than usual with demos of games of all genres and some technological progress. One of the best games of the show was Konami's *GTI Club Cote D'Azur* running on new 3D technology (the company has developed a new board titled Cobra, in cooperation with IBM). This linked racing game has superb graphics, unusual camera angles, and features cars such as Minis and Renault 5s careering around southern France. Konami's other showstopper was *Solar Assault*, the latest installment of its *Gradius* series, but this time rendered in glorious 3D and even housed in its *Speed King* cabinet as well as in conventional stand-up coin-ops.

Of course, *Virtua Fighter 3* was the fighting game of the show and is about to be released in Japan any day. Completed versions of *Wave Runner* and Sega *Touring Car Championship* were also present at the booth. As far as brand new games, though, only one was shown — *Super Giant Slalom* developed by AM1. This is an obvious competitor to Namco's *Alpine Racer 2* which also debuted at the event. Sega's game features outstanding graphics, particularly in the night time stages on illuminated pistes.

Namco's *Aqua Jet* is based on System 22, but it's not as fun as *WaveRace 64*

While System 33 has possibly been delayed until the AOU early next year, Namco seemed short of new games. Apart from its wonderful *Tokyo War* (now playable in linked form) and *Alpine Racer 2* (also linked), Namco presented *AquaJet* for the first time, with graphics similar to the other jetski games on show from Sega and Konami but with some attractive circuits and more of an emphasis on jumping.

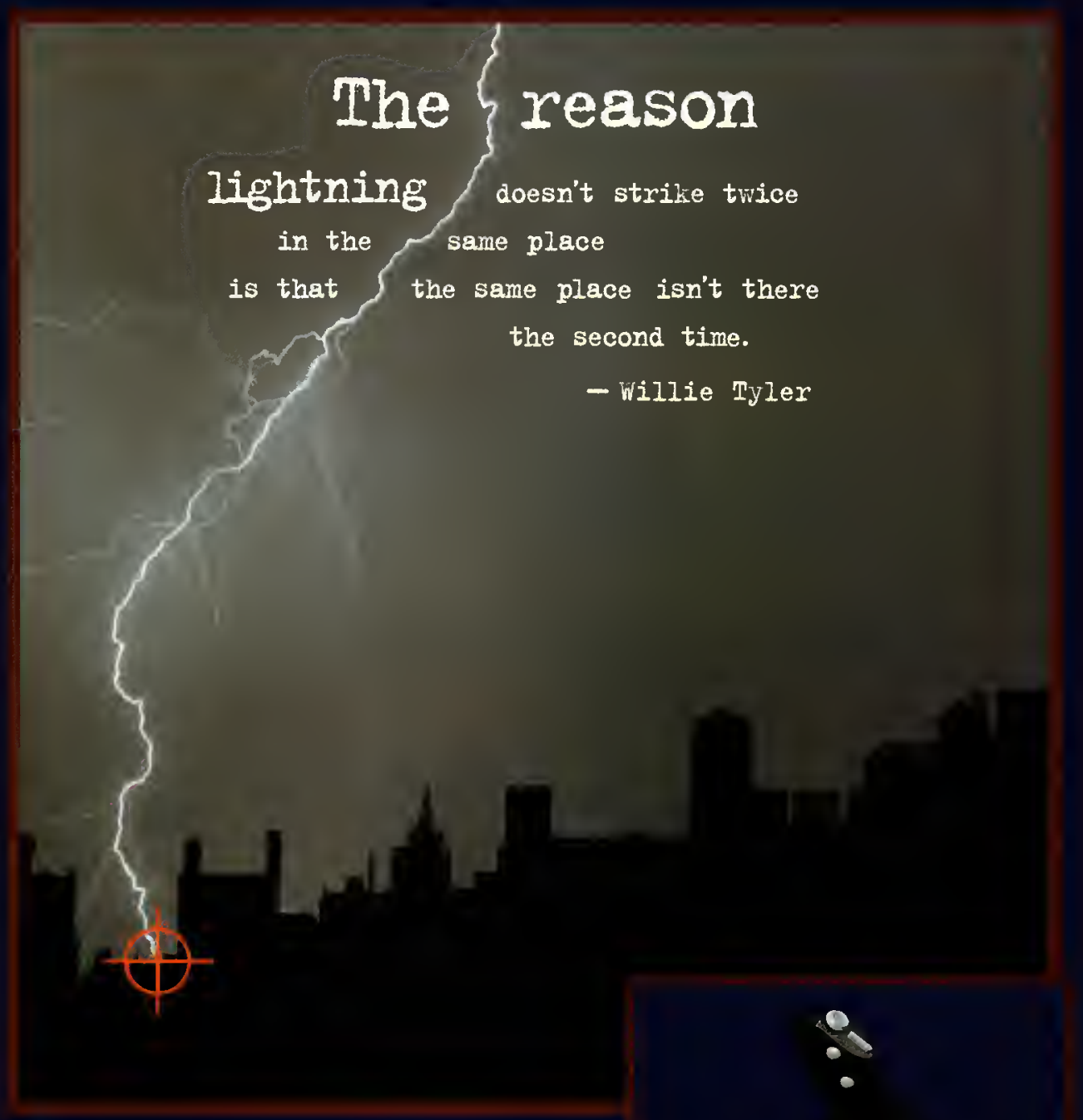
But really it was Capcom that, in some respects, held most of the cards. *Warzard* (running on its new CPSIII board) and *X-Men vs Street Fighter* both proved that there is still progress to be made in the 2D arena, while its *Tekken 2*-like *Street Fighter EX* was in direct contrast to *Street Fighter III* seen briefly on video. In 2D...

Sega's *Super Giant Slalom* jockeyed for position, and the impressive *Virtua Fighter 3* wowed the crowds. Capcom's *Street Fighter EX* was a surprise given its ambivalence towards 3D

Seymour Cray dies

71-year old computer wizard Seymour Cray, who pioneered the use of transistors in computers died on Saturday the 5th of October, following a traffic crash.

As the inventor of RISC (Reduced Instruction Set Computing) and the builder of world famous super-computers, Cray is credited with revolutionizing computer speed. "As long as you can make them smaller, you can make them faster," Cray once said.



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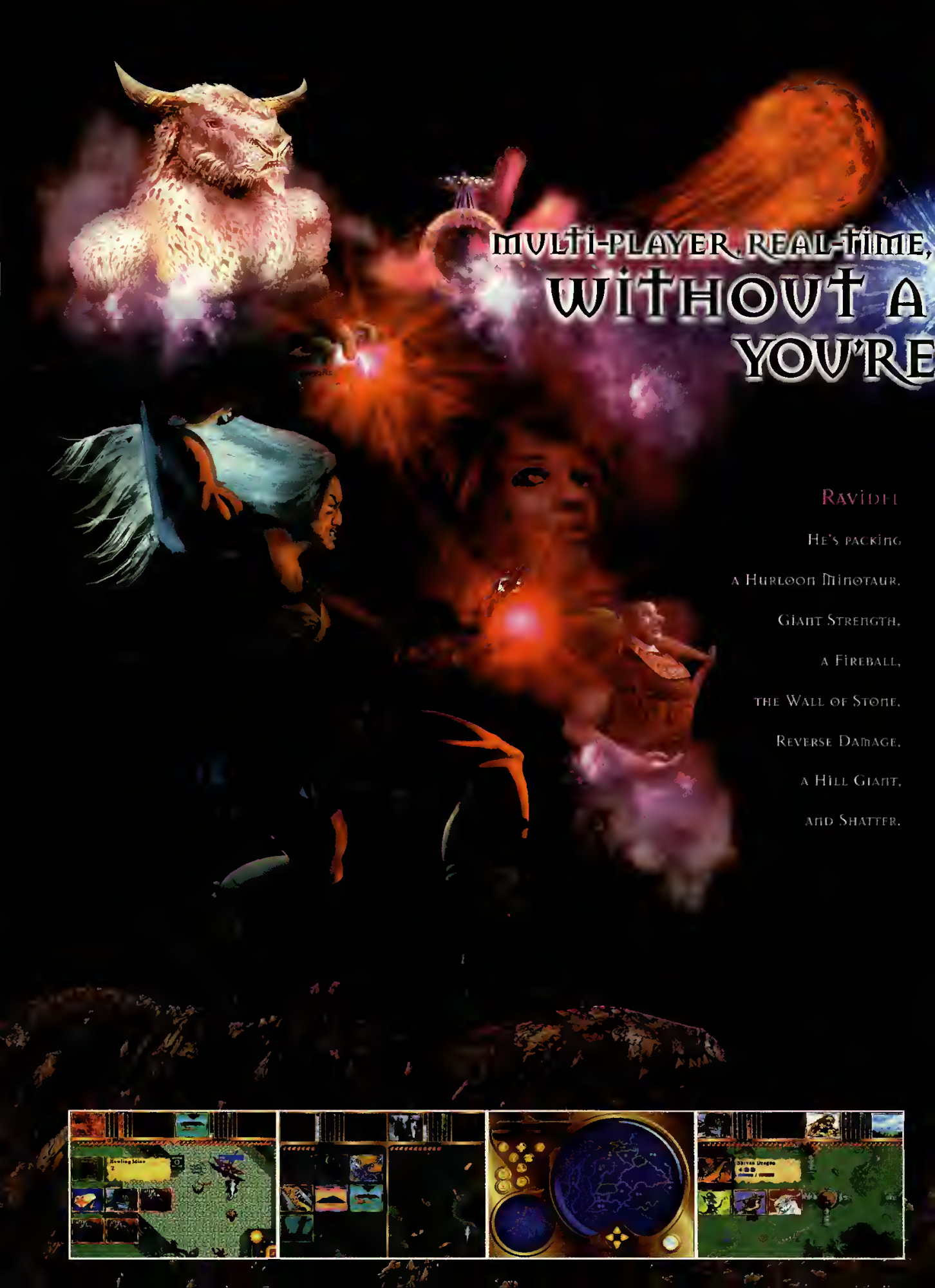
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Arcadia

All the latest arcade and coin-op news

by **Marcus Webb**

Marcus Webb is the editor-in-chief of *RePlay* magazine, the US' leading trade amusement magazine

PC Game Makers Join **Microsoft's** "Revolution"

A diverse coalition headed by Microsoft, allied PC game publishers, and arcade owners are launching what they call a revolution in the arcade videogame industry. Since the business first began back in 1979, coin-operated videogames have most often been sold as complete packages, and this means that arcades are required to buy new hardware and cabinets almost every time they purchase a new game. Today's prices run as high as $6,000 for standard upright videos and as high as $25,000 per unit for deluxe sit-down simulators.

Microsoft and its allies plan to change all that. They are boldly challenging status-quo leaders like Sega and Namco by setting up a radically different alternative delivery method, as onginally proposed by the National Amusement Network (NANI). The proposed method will include three massive, related shake-ups:

(1) Universal, standard hardware — arcade videogame cabinets equipped with standard, upgradeable, Windows-based PC engines — will be created and adopted.

(2) This, in turn, will enable game software from dozens, perhaps hundreds, of publishers to be adapted and sold for arcade use, at a cost of under $1,000 per title to arcade owners.

(3) It will also permit game software to be downloaded to locations, rather than hand-delivered as is the case now. (Eventually the Microsoft/NANI setup is also expected to enable real-time remote multiplayer gameplay, too.)

Williams/Bally-Midway, creators of *War Gods* and the *Mortal Kombat* games, is the first "traditional" arcade videogame manufacturer to switch over to the new paradigm with at least one product capable of using the NANI system. (It's a countertop multi-menu piece with simple videogames for bars and taverns.) More arcade-oriented titles from this Chicago factory may well be offered for NANI use in future months.

NANI's plans have been kicked around in public discussions — and in this column — for a couple of years. But suddenly, with the backing of Microsoft and a concrete list of game publishers, what was once theory is now looking very much like reality. At press time, insiders confirmed that several independent PC game developers and publishers plan to join Microsoft in supporting the NANI concept with software. Although no formal announcement came on September 26 at the AMOA International Expo (a Dallas trade show), it was hinted that other game publishers are waiting in the wings.

Now the question for the arcade business is this: Who will win the war to establish the dominant business model? Will it be the traditional coin-op giants with their dedicated platforms? Or, will it be the newcomers like Microsoft and NANI with their "open" systems, which run like the U.S. computer industry?

Stay tuned!

Microsoft's **Arcade** Apps

In a move firmly tied to the NANI initiative, Microsoft is developing software architecture for arcade applications, starting with a function called DirectArcade that will run on Windows NT 4.0. DirectArcade performs as an interface to give a PC game all the functions — pay-for-play, cabinet harness connections, joystick movements, and so on — that are necessary to make a PC game arcade-ready. PC game developers will be able introduce their games to arcades first, knowing that any title that proves an arcade hit will presumably become a mega-hit when it goes to the home PC market. The arcade exposure can also serve as a massive beta test program to let publishers tinker with gameplay until it's perfect, prior to PC release.

Microsoft, NANI, and their allies believe the back-inventory of thousands of existing PC game titles represents a potential gold mine for everybody involved. Beyond adapting existing PC games to arcades, NANI and Microsoft are also actively encouraging game publishers and authors to develop brand new PC-based games with equal emphasis on arcade suitability.

Konami Boasts **5 million** Polygons Per Second

Suddenly the coin-op videogame factories are exploding with new advanced graphics hardware. The major fall trade show, the AMOA Expo, featured CG graphics from — well, everybody. Only Capcom and Data East were out of the mainstream; they're sticking to their traditional martial arts style fighting games and 2D graphics. For now.

Super-realistic graphics were in Sega's *Virtua Fighter 3*, as expected. However, Konami claims its forthcoming "Cobra" system (created as a joint venture with IBM) will vault right past the Sega Model 3 platform. Konami claims that games using Cobra will process 5 million polygons per second. The limited preview of a Cobra-based fighting game it demonstrated in Dallas only showcased the hardware running at one million polygons per second — no explanation was offered as to why.

Atari also has an undisclosed "mindblowing" fighting game on the way that it hopes will challenge *VF3* for graphic dominance in arcade fighting pieces. Look for these advanced Konami and Atari fighters by the spring of '97.

Meanwhile, this fall and winter, you'll see several super-fun sitdown driving simulators with photorealistic, texture-mapped CG graphics and inventive gameplay twists. Williams/Bally-Midway's new *Cruisin' World*, was voted best new game of the show by arcade owners, but much of their vote was based on its low price. Players may vote for Sega's *Touring Car Championship*, Atari's *San Francisco Rush*, Konami's *Winding Heat*, Namco's *Tokyo Wars*, or even Jaleco's *GP Racing*.

Oh, and get ready to burn rubber (or churn H_2O) at your local arcade as a flood of jetski titles are heading you way... ng

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Generator

The issues affecting the way games are made

by George Zachary

George Zachary, who, when working with Silicon Graphics, was interviewed in NG 14, is now a partner at Mohr Davidow Ventures, a technology venture capital firm. To contact George try sending email to him at gzachary@ mdv.com

Force Feedback: The Coming "Sense" in Gaming

Videogames have traditionally involved visual and auditory feedback — you see and hear what's going on in the game. One form of feedback has not been well explored in the commercial realm of gaming — haptic feedback — that of feeling what's going on in the game world.

Last month, we covered the distant potential of tactile feedback — that of delicate pressure to the player's skin. This month, we examine the more attainable world of force feedback.

In the world of gaming, force feedback could be used to recreate the aerodynamic forces on your banking fighter in a flight sim, the roughness of terrain when moving through an RPG, the kick-back of a shotgun in *Quake 2*, or the weight of your about-to-be body-slammed opponent in *Virtua Fighter 4*.

Force feedback involves applying forces to the body that act through a person's muscular, skeletal, and balance systems. Force feedback is intended to make the overall body feel sensations, rather than just tactile feedback's fingertips. It has the added benefit of also creating a rough sense of tactile feedback as well.

If all this sounds far-fetched, you've probably actually experienced it already. Games like Sega's *Daytona USA* and Atari's *Hard Drivin'* offer basic force-feedback steering wheels.

Force feedback was researched extensively at places like the University of Utah and M.I.T. in combination with the U.S. Defense Department. Originally, force feedback research focused on industrial/defense projects where humans could control some type of robot from a remote location. This robot would usually be used in a place that offered a lot of physical risk to humans, like a radioactive clean-up zone or in defusing a bomb.

These research projects focused on providing force feedback through two different methods. The first and more massive method was the M.I.T./University of Utah "ARM." A user would wear the "ARM" exoskeleton over his real arm, and the "ARM" would then recreate forceful movement based on information received from the remote robot. The "ARM" looked like a knight's armor powered by massive motors, and it had to have extensive safeguards built into it so that the user's arm literally was not ripped out of the body. As you might expect, not too many volunteers or researchers were excited about participating. This is one situation where the user might not want to be a beta-tester!

The second and simpler method of force feedback has involved "motorizing" an existing interface — for example, adding motors to control or limit the movement of a joystick or steering wheel (such as with *Hard Drivin'* and *Daytona USA*).

History has shown us that this method will prevail over the exoskeleton method. There are many reasons why, but basically consumers don't like "wearing" peripherals, which tend to be prohibitively expensive.

In 1996, two major business announcements bring force feedback technology back to the news. The first is the announcement by CH Products that it will offer force feedback joystick technology from a California company named Immersion (see **NG 17**).

The other activity is Microsoft's acquisition of Exos, the force-feedback exoskeleton hand company.

The big news in both announcements is that these two major competitors in the joystick business are gearing up for their next battle. The good news for consumers will be that the battle will bring a high quality force feedback experience to home systems.

While both companies are offering great technology and the quality of the joystick-based force feedback experience is high, the next 12 months of market experiments by force-feedback joystick producers will be heavily influenced by how well new exciting games integrate the force-feedback technology into the game — will developers use them?

If these companies can make force-feedback integration easy, robust, and powerful for game makers, force feedback is here to stay. If not, expect the market to exert some force feedback of its own and push the early products out of the game. ng

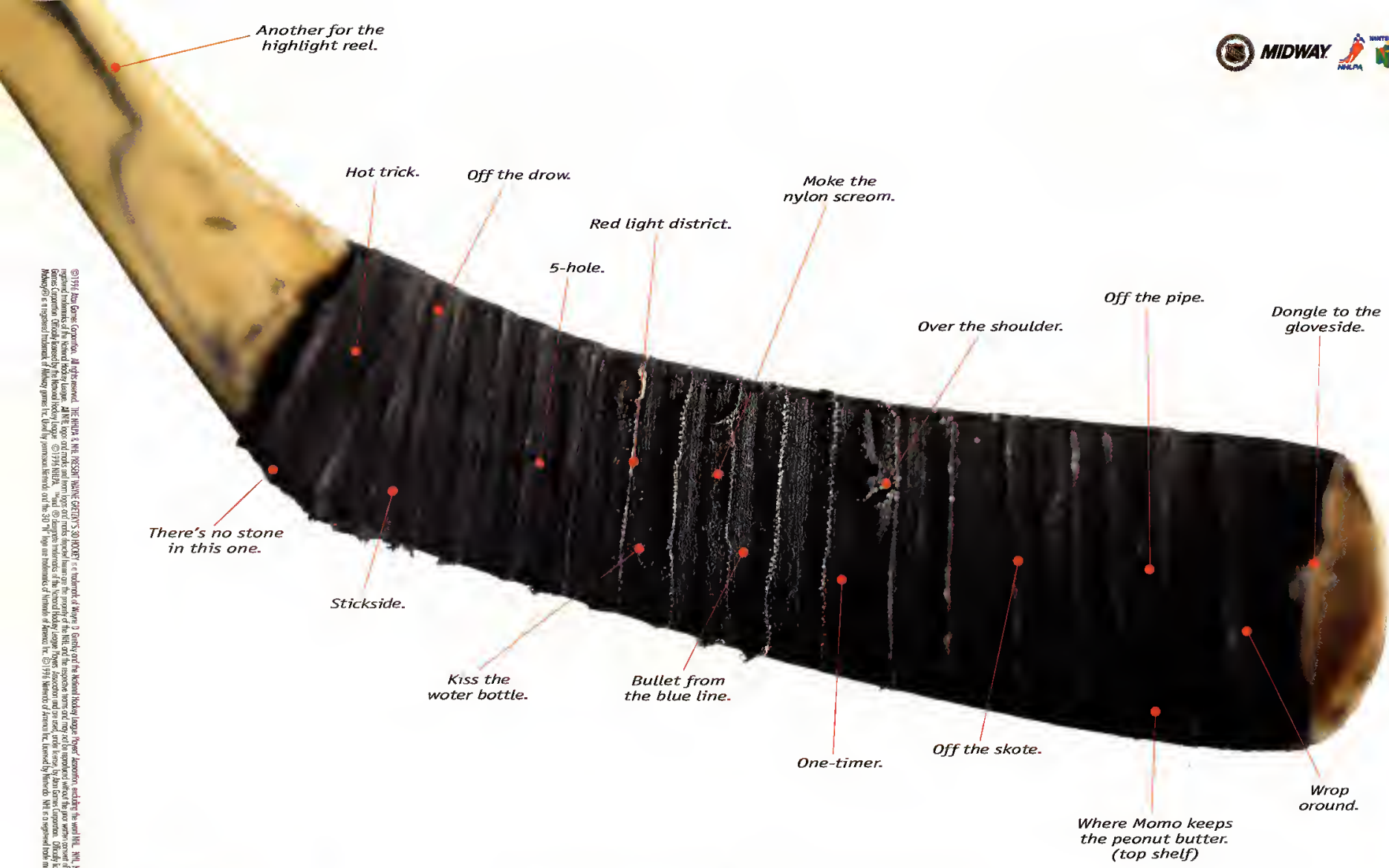
Crib sheet

Stuff every gamer should know. This month, one of history's greatest game makers:

No. 7 Infocom

So who or what is Infocom? It's a development house in Cambridge, Mass., that was active in the '80s.
What did it do? Really good text adventures.
Seriously? Yes.
Why should I care? Well, not only was it one of the first truly commercial game houses, but its adventure games were some of the first — and finest — of the genre.
But aren't adventures better now, with plenty of graphics, and no irritating typing? Not necessarily. With just text, Infocom's developers could create much larger worlds, limited only by a player's imagination — not by art or video restrictions. Also, keyboard input enables a much more complex and varied interaction with a game than a simple mouse can.
So what went wrong? Only a relatively small number of gamers are willing to play text games. And, as the industry grew, this audience stayed static, and it became harder to achieve what was becoming acceptable sales. Also, Infocom lost its shirt on a failed database product.
And then? Activision bought the company, fired everyone, and now uses the label to periodically re-release the text games, and high-tech "remakes."
Do they play as well as the old games? Not even close.

*Next Generation OnLine, http.//www.next-generation.com/



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breaking

movers & shakers

The business news that affects the games you play.

by Christian Svenson

Christian Svenson is the assistant editor and webmaster at Next Generation Online which can be found at http://www.next-generation.com/

NINTENDO 64 FRENZY

NEWSLINE: The Nintendo 64 retail feeding frenzy went as smoothly as anyone could have expected. That is, not very smoothly at all. Nintendo had rather hopefully put a September 29 deadline on the on-sale date. But virtually every retailer in the country was shifting boxes by the 26th. Nintendo, realizing that it could not hope to stop the malaise, yielded. Most retailers sold hardware stocks as soon as they arrived.

BOTTOMLINE: The much-cherished Grand Launch Day is a thing of the past. Retailers are simply not prepared to suffer boxes sitting in their storerooms, while anxious customers pace up and down in their showrooms. It just ain't natural. At least the major chains had the decency to ask the people at Nintendo if they minded terribly if the deadline was broken. Nintendo didn't mind at all.

VIRGIN SUCKS UP VIACOM

NEWSLINE: In yet another example of corporate streamlining and merging, Virgin has taken on responsibility for the publishing, marketing, and administration of Viacom New Media's product portfolio and development team. The move could mean up to 70 lost jobs at Viacom's New York headquarters.

BOTTOMLINE: Unfortunately for those losing their jobs, it all makes sense. Virgin is wholly owned by Spelling which is 77% owned by the sprawling media megopolis which is Viacom. Why run two separate publishing interests each replicating many functions? Especially as (let's face it) Virgin's publishing record has dwarfed Viacom New Media's. Large media companies are learning the hard way that software publishing is best left to dedicated software publishers.

TEN GOES LIVE

NEWSLINE: Total Entertainment Network became the first online gaming provider to emerge from the pupae of beta testing. It went live in late September.

BOTTOMLINE: As well as the complications of half a dozen providers vying for marketshare, companies like TEN also have much to fear from software publishers. Many may well follow Id's example and set up free networks as an added service for individual games. But being first has done TEN no harm at all in the short term, and sets the stage for a big online war in 1997.

STAT HAPPY SONY

NEWSLINE: A self-assertive Sony has been toasting its worldwide PlayStation success as it released new detailed accounts of global hardware and software sales. Worldwide sales have now reached 7.2 million units. The installed base in the US is 2.1 million. In Japan it has topped 3.5 million while Europe accounts for 1.6 million. Sony also claims a 6:1 software to hardware ratio, indicating software sales in excess of 40 million units.

BOTTOMLINE: Even die-hard industry cynics must agree PlayStation is flying. In North America, it's outselling the Sega Saturn by something like 3:1. The ratio is similar in Europe. It's worth recalling that three years ago Sega was the darling of the game industry and Sony's plans were just an optimistic blueprint.

PANDEMONIUM AT EA

NEWSLINE: Electronic Arts has scooped the rights to publish Crystal Dynamics's *Pandemonium*. The San Mateo, CA-based publishing giant will be releasing the 3D platformer at the end of this year.

BOTTOMLINE: Since relinquishing its position as a bona fide publisher, Crystal Dynamics has moved from moribund industry player to bright young thing. The decision to market games before publishing deals have been tied up appears to be working with Dynamics cherry-picking publishers it feels appropriate for certain products. Or, perhaps, simply waiting for the best offer.

GAMES LEAD TO GAMBLING?

NEWSLINE: Videogames are leading young people into a life of gambling, according to Senator Jay Dardenne. The Louisiana Senator points out that, according to a recent survey, one in seven Louisianans ages 18 to 21 is a compulsive gambler. He said: "There is all too easy a leap from videogames to video poker."

BOTTOMLINE: Videogames are proven to be a favorite target of politicians. Not only are we led to believe that games lead to poor levels of education, short attention spans, tendencies toward violence, and dismal social skills, but we also asked to swallow that *Baku Baku* is the first step toward video poker hell. The encouraging news is that very few appear willing to subscribe to this BS.

ng

*Next Generation Online, http://www.next-generation.com/

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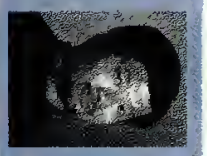
breaking

JOYRIDING

Gaming on the Internet

by Bernard Yee

Bernard Yee is **Next Generation's** online gaming editor, and can be found kicking ass on any online gaming service you care to mention. Reach him at bernardy@pipeline.com



Online Gaming Has A Long Way To Go

I love online gaming as much as the next guy — probably more. I've spent countless hours on games like Kesmai's multiplayer *BattleTech* (the original VGA version) and AOL's *Neverwinter Nights*. When these games first went online, it was easy to believe that this was truly the start of something very, very big.

Recently, I've been hoping to catch some of my initial buzz playing online again, but I haven't been able to find my misplaced enthusiasm. We've got a long way to go before all our online gaming dreams are realized, and I hate to say it, but those who think that trouble-free, super-fast, online multiplayer gaming is just around the corner are going to be sorely disappointed when they log on.

I've read some editorials in some magazines that say the Internet's going to deliver it all, video, audio, news, games. Yeah, right. Right when Jaguar makes a triumphant comeback.

Why am I of so little faith? Follow me: Games are the most demanding computer application around, at least to the general public. But a gamer's appetite for new technology is always underestimated, and — as always — technological advances are seemingly never enough.

When the Pentium was released, no one at Intel thought it would be gamers that would adopt their P5 first. (Their corporate customers sat around and thought, "hey, my 486 is fine — what do I need an upgrade for?") Ditto with Windows 95; home users have jumped on it faster than corporate offices (who are waiting for Windows NT).

I've always known that games drive the computer. We put up with IRQ conflicts to get better sound, unstable drivers to eke out video speed, and a spiraling introduction of faster CPUs to get a few more frames per second. But many people seem to believe that game technology is easy, and that "if you build it, they will come."

So we come to the online world. Look at this news development: America OnLine purchased INN, The ImagiNation Network. AOL's Steve Case claims that people rely on AOL as much as on their telephone and TV. But AOL is the service that went down for a whole day, stranding people who rely on AOL's services for work *and* play. AOL is the company that on at least two occasions in the last month wouldn't allow me to access my e-mail.

So sorry Steve, but my telephone doesn't go down on me all day (unless there's a natural disaster), and my television always lets me play back the episode of "The X-Files" I recorded. And yet AOL is going to provide gateways to Engage and/or ImagiNation Network? I'm really going to play the impressive-looking *Red Baron 2* on a system that can't even deliver my e-mail? Before this becomes an ADL flame story, the Internet in some ways is no different, through no fault of my ISP.

DTI (www.dti.net) has a T1 line (a good-sized pipe, though no T3) and provides my ISDN access, and off-peak, it flies. But when net traffic is up, my ISDN connection sometimes slows to a crawl. While a game that doesn't rely on latency might run fine (3DD's online fantasy RPG *Meridian 59* seems to fall in this category, as does Blizzard's *Diablo*), how are games like *Mercenaries* going to react to the unpredictable Internet? My guess: not well. It'll run great sometimes, or like your hero broke his leg when Net traffic is high.

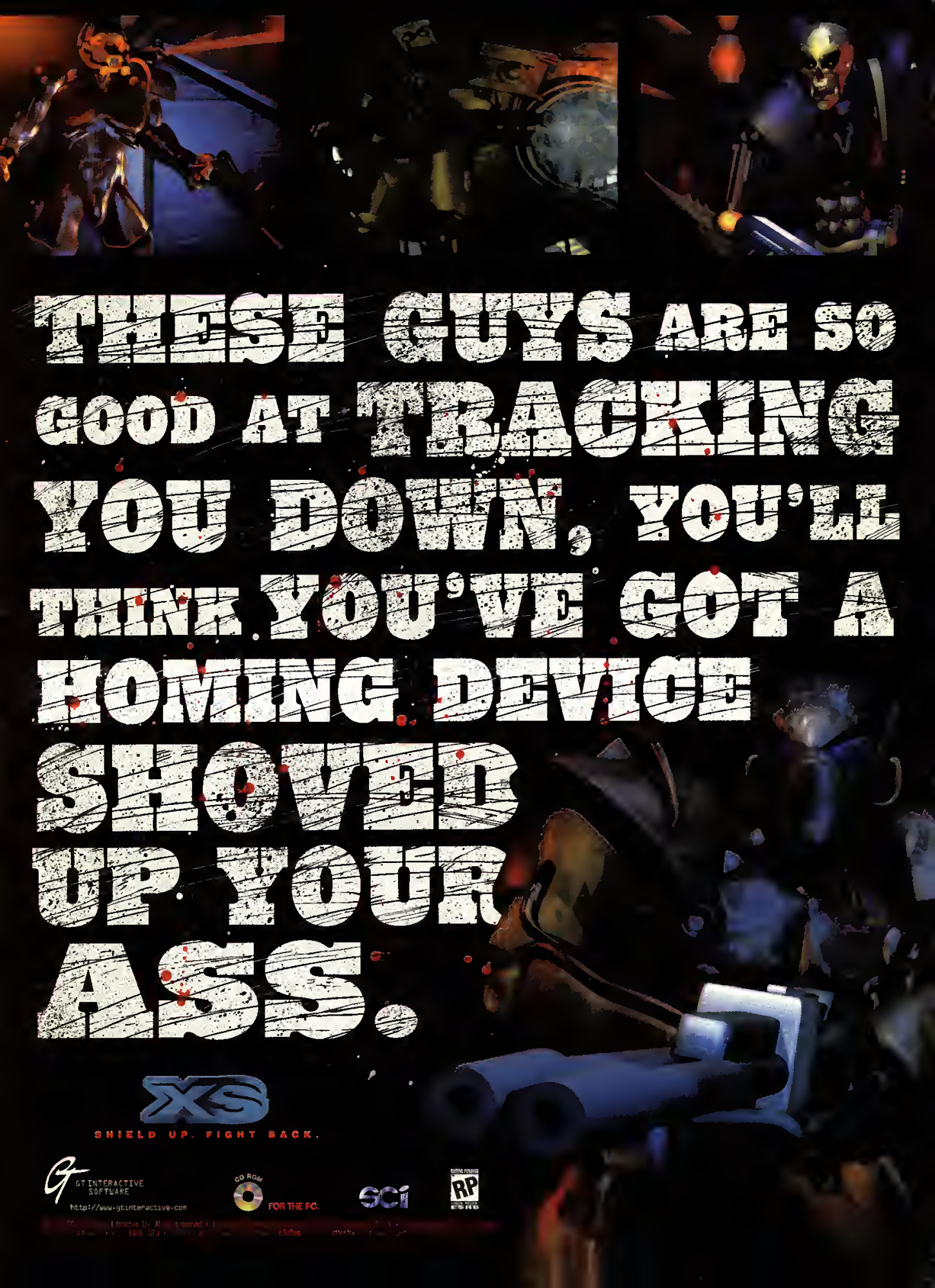
Yes, the online gaming services are claiming low latencies, below 200 ms (your PC trades information with the host server five times a second). But if they manage to provide this consistently, I'll eat their pick of any NG cover. The only people that can solve this problem are the mysterious men in black at MCI, Sprint, and AT&T, who own much of the communications backbone around the country. When they upgrade to faster routers, fiber optics, and ADSL, we'll get faster throughput, more reliability, and lower latency.

But I'm not holding my breath. Instead, I'm looking closer to home. In fact, some of the best multiplayer game experiences have been in my apartment. My home LAN just got a new member: the 3Com Modem+Ethernet PC Card has given me reliable 28.8K modem access and speedy LAN connectivity, so I can play a four person deathmatch here, with *Duke* or *Quake*. Got a notebook and a PC? Then you can have a LAN.

And you can taunt anyone who cares to listen within earshot, without a bandwidth-gobbling DSVD connection.

Data stream

Number of Nintendo 64s sold in the first week of sale in the U.S.: **300,000**
Number of copies of the album "Smurfs Go Pop" sold in its first seven weeks on release: **200,000**
Number of people currently beta-testing 3DO's internet game, *Meridian 59*: **25,000**
Amount of time they've collectively spent playing the game since December 1995: **500,000 hours**
Percentage of lottery jackpot winners who choose to return to work: **51%**
Number of America On-Line members, according to America OnLine: **6.2 million**
Decrease in body temperature of the average American due to prolonged over-use of central heating: **1 degree centigrade**
According to a USS8 Telescoop survey "Portrait of the American Household," percentage of Americans who leave the TV on to keep a pet company: **15%**
Percentage who consider watching TV with their children to be a family activity: **78%**
Percentage of Americans who said they could not live without television: **19%**
Amount Demi Moore earned to appear in Strip Tease: **$12.5 million**
Copies of the *Street Fighter II* anime video sold in the U.S.: **200,000**
Total box office takings from *Mortal Kombat*: **$70 million**
Number of households in the U.S. with TV sets: **97 million**
Cost to Warner for resigning rock group R.E.M.: **$88 million**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Datebook

November

IAPPA, the **International Association of Amusements and Attractions**, is like a big arcade show except for the simulators, rides, and amusement attractions for which it's famous. Closed to the public, it is held from November 20 to 23 in New Orleans, LA, at the New Orleans Convention Center. Call (703) 236-4800 for more information or accommodation inquiries.

Comdex will take place in Las Vegas, NV from November 17 to 21 and is open to the public. For more information on this enormous show, call (617) 449-6600.

Nintendo Corporate Limited's **Shoshinkai** will be the place for all in the game industry worldwide who are interested in finding out more about the 64DD add-on for Nintendo 64. It will also see the unveiling of *Zelda 64* and whatever other software Nintendo manages to get ready in time. Not open to the public. For more information contact Nintendo at (213) 623-4200.

December

Fall Internet World will happen December 10 to 13 at the Javits Convention Center, NY. Call Mecklermedia at (203) 341-2855.

April

Computer Game Developer's Conference (CGDC) will take place April 25 to 29 at the Santa Clara Convention Center, Silicon Valley, CA. The show is for programmers, writers, producers, product managers, artists, musicians, and assorted supergeeks. To get on the mailing list, send your vitals (name, title, company name, address, and so on) to cgdc@mfi.com. Those interested in exhibiting, call Gina Bovero at (415) 356-3406 or e-mail gbovero@mfi.com. Visit the web site at http://www.cgdc.com. If you're interested in joining the Computer Game Developer's Association (you get a $25 discount on the show), call (415) 948-CGDC or fax (415) 948-2744.

May

Multimedia 97 Exposition and Forum will take place May 6 to 9 at the Metropolitan Toronto Convention Center, Toronto, Canada. The show features five major components: Multimedia Communications, Virtual Reality World, VICOM, Showcase On Production, and Electronic Design. For more information call (905) 660-2491, fax (905) 660-2492, or e-mail moreinfo@multimedia.ca. Official WWW-site: http://multimedia.magic.ca

June

The one and only **Electronic Entertainment Exposition** (aka **E3**) takes place in Atlanta on June 19 through June 21. Open to the public for one day. Visit http://www.mha.com/e3/ for more information on E3.

SHOW ORGANIZERS: If your show isn't listed here it's because we don't know about it. FAX us on (415) 468-4686; E-mail us at ngonline@imagine-inc.com; or write us at Date Book, **Next Generation**, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005. See? Simple

GADGET

Peripherals, accessories, gizmos, add-ons, thingies, and stuff

SideWinder

Price: $39.95
Manufacturer: Microsoft
System: PC

Much as it pains us to admit that Microsoft can do anything right, it seems to have done it again. The SideWinder game pad may very well be the best game pad available for PC. It seems odd that at a time when console game pads (starting with the Nintendo 64) are striving to offer analog control, PC game pads are stretching to accommodate digital functions, but hey, that's the way it is. The SideWinder features an eight-way digital pad, six buttons, including two trigger buttons under the index fingers, and complete programmability. It also feels incredible. Nice work.

Wireless Pro Controller

Price: $24.95
Manufacturer: Naki
System: PlayStation

This is the wireless version of Naki's Pro Controller (duh), which came to be nicknamed "The Fat Pad" thanks to its, um, generous proportions. Wireless pads have an inherent appeal in theory, but generally tend to fall short in execution. To its credit, the WPC lasts longer than most on a pair of AAA batteries and is less picky than some about range and angle to the receiver (although package claims of 30 feet are somewhat exaggerated). Still, that fat old thing just doesn't sit well in the hand, the buttons don't give much feedback, and wireless or no, it offered zero functionality over the standard PlayStation pad. Keep looking.

Superpad 64 Plus

Price: $24.95
Manufacturer: Performance/InterAct
System: Nintendo 64

The first third-party pad for the N64 seems like a morph job between Nintendo's Batarang and the PlayStation pad. Although unwieldy at first, given enough time you can probably get used to the clumsy, non-symmetrical design. The six buttons are placed nicely for fighting games, and the analog stick has a tighter feel than Nintendo's. But the D-pad just feels wrong and the shoulder and trigger buttons are awkwardly placed. Still, it's cheaper than the Nintendo pads and seems to be just as sturdy — so if you need an extra pad, at least there's an alternative.

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References:
Don Cortese: Deceased
Chuck Brown: Deceased
Barry Polipooey: Deceased

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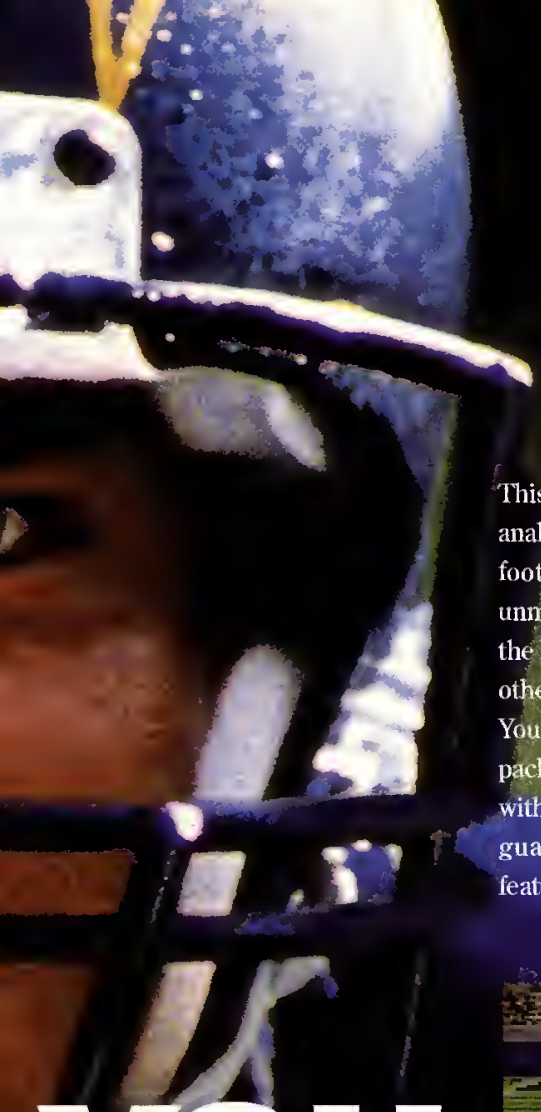

This isn't a game, it's a war. So be prepared for battle. Now, enough military analogies, let's talk football. This is NFL GameDay™ '97. It's better than any football game ever created. The artificial intelligence in this game is unmatched. Players on the field think, react and perform like they do in the NFL. Defenses and offenses learn your tendencies and key on them. In other words, there are no bread and butter plays to go to on third and long. You'll go head-on with real defensive coverages, including nickel and dime packages and Dallas' Cover 4. Defensive fronts attack your offensive line with stunts and swim techniques. And with new, larger players you'll see guards and tackles trapping and pulling. This game is loaded with features, too. This is real football, baby. So welcome to the NFL.

YOU AND WHAT ARMY?

PlayStation

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THE BIG FIGHT

Which videogame system is the best? Which console should *you* buy? The bad news is that there's not one simple answer. The good news is that all the info you'll need to make your own decision starts on the next page...

PlayStation 47

Sega Saturn 59

Nintendo 64 71

Photography Mark Madeo

Videogaming is not a sport for wimps. If a gamer truly wants to stay on the cutting edge, it requires taking a gamble every now and then. And when it comes to investing in a new system, the stakes run in to the hundreds of dollars. All new hardware platforms promise the moon, but at each new system's birth, a gamer handing over hard-earned dollars to be the first on the block to own it has no guarantee that the system will ever even successfully leave the launch pad. Even established consoles can suddenly fail — especially if superceded by more powerful rivals.

In the run-up to the holiday season of 1996, there are three major home consoles vying for your gaming dollar — Nintendo's 64, Sega's Saturn, and Sony's PlayStation. Obviously, the PC is a viable game platform also, but since a it costs ten times the price of a TV-based console, **Next Generation** doesn't believe that it is in the same market. Also, we don't believe that M2 will launch with any kind of muscle within the next 12 months, so we wouldn't advise holding off on a purchase in anticipation of Matsushita getting its act together. So the choice for gamers is really between these three major platforms. But before we get started on the merits of each system, it's worth reflecting on why we have to make such a difficult decision in the first place.

THE STORY SO FAR

Where (and from whom) did the console come from?

Anyone who was aware of Atari's financial health as it launched Jaguar could have predicted the system's failure. More cynically, anyone aware of Atari's track record with new hardware would have probably come to the same conclusion. The point is that in trying to work out where something is going, it's useful to know where it has come from.

As mentioned elsewhere in this feature, it's difficult to place trust in any videogame hardware company. (It's too easy for success or failure to be reversed overnight). But that's not to say that it's not worth studying a system's roots: Why was it launched? What is the parent company trying to achieve? How committed is this company to its system's success? And — bottom line — how powerful is the parent company, anyway? Obviously, the answers to these questions will help any gamer decide which console has the best backing.

All diehard gamers have been suckered by ill-fated new technology at least once (and if you haven't, you probably haven't been taking enough chances). Recent examples of videogame hardware that left gamers stranded include 3DO, Jaguar, 32X, Virtual Boy, TurboGrafx16, and Sega CD. The problem is that at the start of a system's life, a gamer has to place a lot of trust in the hardware and the company behind it. But one thing that the ups and downs of Atari, Nintendo, and Sega (and the rise from nowhere of Sony) prove is that it's difficult to trust any company in this business for longer than five minutes. Today's winner can become tomorrow's struggling loser faster than most gamers can say "Welcome to the next level."

So why isn't there one single videogame format, in the same way that there is just one format of CD player, or VCR, or TV, or audio tape player? Most consumer electronics products follow some form of industry standard. In this way, you can be sure that all makes of TVs plug in to all makes of VCRs, and that CDs from all record labels work on CD players from all hi-fi manufacturers. But

MARKETING MUSCLE

Sell, sell, sell!

Total marketing budget, Oct-December: $XX million

It's been said that doing business without advertising is like winking at a girl in the dark — you know what you are doing, but nobody else does.

Indeed, it's true to say that how a product is marketed is just as important as the product itself when it comes to selling large numbers to mainstream America. Sure, a diehard gamer may know better, but for many many ordinary citizens out there, the only thing known about which system to buy is what's learned from Sega, Sony, and Nintendo's TV commercials. The console giants know this, and the three will combine to spend $164 million on marketing this quarter.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Boosters, gizmos, add-ons

In an attempt to both keep initial hardware prices low and prolong a console's lifespan (and maybe even make a little additional profit along the way), all manufacturers release a peripheral or two. Each of the three main console contenders has an expensive, high-profile add-on in the works. And these, as well as the console itself, have to be considered when evaluating the strengths, weaknesses, and potential of each system.

ng special

GAMES

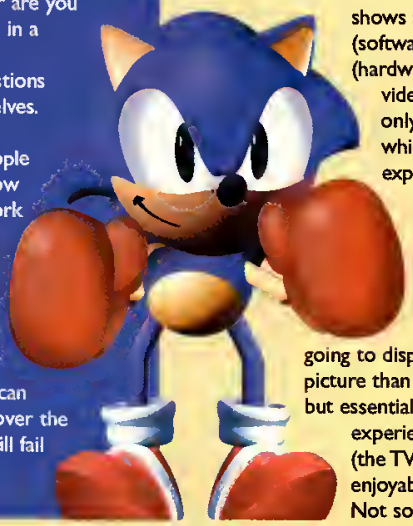
So how good are the actual games? This is the most important — and complex — category of them all

There's a saying that nobody wants an electronic drill — they want holes in a wall. The same is true with videogaming. No one buys a game machine because they feel a desire to own a stylish lump of grey plastic — they want to play games.

So obviously, it is the games themselves that should be the number one priority in deciding which system to own. But even this decision isn't as straightforward as it may seem.

Given that you can't have everything (unfortunately, this world isn't perfect) would you rather have quality or quantity of games? Can you live without sports titles? Do you *have* to have that favorite arcade conversion? is the magic of the supposed "best game ever" lost on you? Are your gaming tastes broad? Or are you looking for a lot of titles in a particular gaming genre?

There are many questions gamers must ask themselves. Additionally, there are questions to ask the people making these games: How easy is the system to work with? Have we seen all that it has to offer, or is there potential for greater games in the future? All these factors make the difference between a console that can provide great gameplay over the distance, and one that will fail early on in its lifespan.



TECH SPECS

The black art of crunching numbers

It's becoming increasingly difficult to compare system specifications on a hard number-by-number basis. As technology becomes more and more sophisticated, terms like "polygons per second" have less and less meaning. Still, most people like knowing exactly what their systems can do. For them we've provided the most complete tech specs ever published. While it's meaningless to try to use these specs to compare systems directly (anyone want to argue that the Jaguar's 64 bits make it more powerful than PlayStation?), these specs give an idea of the different systems' potential.

have you tried plugging a Jaguar cart into a PlayStation? Why doesn't this one particular industry work the same way as the TV, VCR, or hi-fi industry? What gives?

There are three reasons why videogaming doesn't tow the standard line. Reason one is that videogaming is still a very young, immature (in the business sense) industry. And with immaturity comes volatility — and hence the rollercoaster, "boom to bust" ride that hardware companies have experienced over videogaming's 25 short years. Each new generation of hardware wipes the industry's slate clean, with success in one generation — so far at least — never guaranteeing success in the next.

Reason two has to do with the importance of technological evolution. All consumer electronics industries — including CD players, TVs, VCRs, and videogames — include both software and hardware. The CD business has music (software) and CD players (hardware). The TV industry has TV shows and movies (software) and TV sets (hardware). But videogaming is the only industry in which the end experience is extensively reliant on both software *and* hardware. Sure, a $2,000 big screen TV is going to display a better picture than a $200 portable, but essentially the viewing experience is the same (the TV show is either enjoyable, or it sucks). Not so with a videogame platform, where technological muscle can revolutionize the gaming experience (*Super Mario 64* simply would not be possible on last year's technology). Hence, as long as gamers continue to demand bigger and brighter software, technology has to keep up. And that means the regular introduction of new platforms.

The third, and perhaps most weighty reason, why videogaming refuses to settle down to one unified standard has to do with how the hardware companies make money. Because game systems are traditionally aimed at kids, the price of a new Sega, Sony, or Nintendo console has

UNDER THE HOOD

Pamela Lee isn't the only one packing some sexy silicon...

No one buys a car without looking under the hood, but few stores will rip open an N64 on request, so we've done it for you.

Checking out the innards of a system is important for a couple of reasons. First, being able to ascertain the neatness of the electrical engineers who designed the system can tell volumes about a system's design and potential.

Also, frankly, it's simply interesting to see systems at a chip level, complete with identifications of key chips and areas on the board. And, finally, we've gotten hundreds of letters asking us to do it.

to be kept low. Early on in the history of home consoles Nintendo figured out that if they could ensure future profits from software, then they could afford to sell their hardware systems at little or no profit. In many cases, videogame hardware is actually sold at a loss.

The flip side of this coin, however, is that to guarantee software profits, the hardware manufacturer also has to have control of the software market. And that means either releasing all the games itself (not practical — gamers demand a large library of software), or making sure that when someone else makes a game for its system, it takes a healthy slice of the profits. And this, through licensing and manufacturing fees, is exactly what Sega, Sony, and Nintendo do.

The only way to ensure this software control, however, is to own all the patents and rights to the particular hardware that the software is written for. And that means designing a proprietary system.

Eventually, it is expected that the videogame industry will fall into line with other forms of consumer electronics (or so many experts think). But the failure of Trip Hawkins's to introduce such a unified standard with 3DO showed everyone just how far off this dream is.

Which brings us back to our starting point: Buying a new videogame platform in 1996 can be a risky investment. A console's success doesn't just depend on the raw power of the hardware (GameBoy outsold Atari's Lynx). It doesn't just depend on being the first with new technology (TurboGrafx CD, anyone?). It doesn't just depend on having the best game (there's still no guarantee that Nintendo 64 will catch up with PlayStation). It doesn't just depend on having the neatest marketing gimmick (Jaguar was "the world's first 64-bit game console!"). And it doesn't just depend on being the cheapest (it's now possible to pick up a 3DO for under $100 — but are you buying?)

The harsh reality is that the "best" system, the console that will offer the best gaming experience both today and tomorrow, is often the one that thrives best in the marketplace. The system that sells the most has the brightest looking future, as success secures future support from game developers, and drives prices down. Market forces at work, ladies and gentlemen — it's an often harsh, but nevertheless beautiful thing.

And what determines a game system's commercial success? There are five main factors: hardware muscle, software support, the library of games both currently available and due to be released, the marketing strategy promoting the system, and the future prognosis of the system, based on the resources and will of the manufacturer, and where the system is in its life cycle. Each of these factors, for each machine, is discussed over the following pages.

In the end, though, it doesn't matter which system you own, as long as you enjoy it. It's been said that to some, videogaming is a matter of life and death, but that to **Next Generation** and its readers, it's a lot more important than that. It's true — but only because it can be so much fun.

ng

TECHNO-LOGY

Useful benchmark, or red herring?

Comparing system hardware can be deceiving. Can N64 be on top, with 64-bit chips, if it can only store 12MB of data on carts versus 650MB for PlayStation? Is PlayStation's hardware design *too* elegant, removing the possibility for future price cuts through hardware integration? Does Saturn have more potential, and thus more power, than PlayStation?

The answers aren't always clear, and often vary depending on individual needs and desires (an RPG fan will probably want a system with more storage space than a puzzle game junkie). But while technology must be carefully considered before any purchase decision is made, it should never be the only purchase criterion.

CONCLUSION

The bottom line — should you buy this system or not?

Of course, the ideal solution is to own one of each systems. But for most gamers, this simply isn't an alternative — and this means making a choice.

Next Generation wouldn't have the reputation it does if it didn't step up to the plate with an actual opinion. Thus, each segment in this piece ends with a hype-free analysis of each system's merits, its strengths, its weaknesses, its future potential, and our opinion as to whom we would recommend each system as a purchase — if we recommend it at all.

And of course, there are ratings. Each system has been rated on the basis of demonstrable technological prowess (seeing is believing), the marketing strength of the parent company, the state of the existing software library, how this looks likely to change in the future, whether the system is peaking or still on the rise, and then a final score (not necessarily the average of the other scores).

System Scores

Demonstrable hardware power
★★★★★

Current software library
★★★★★

Future software prognosis
★★★★★

Marketing muscle
★★★★★

Overall future prognosis
★★★★★

Final score
★★★★★

HOW ABOUT A BIG 'MECH® WITH AN ORDER TO FRY?

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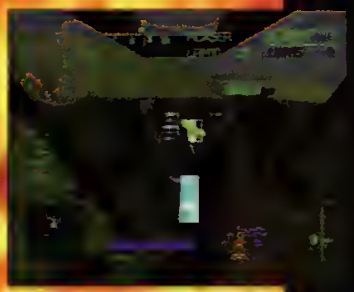

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Hyper-realistic battle effects!

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Faster, more furious combat!

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48 Devastating Missions:

Features the 32 original missions plus 16 brand new missions!

32-bit Enhanced Graphics:

Get blown away by revolutionary visual and motion enhancements that will push your 32-bit system to the limit!

Faster, Higher Intensity Action:

With new quick-response controls and awesome power-ups including invincibility, fire-rate increase and stealth.

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PlayStation

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IT'S LIKE WINNING THE CUP WITH A SLAPSHOT FROM THE BLUELINE.

"NHL POWERPLAY '96 IS WITHOUT A DOUBT THE BEST HOCKEY GAME EVER MADE FOR ANY SYSTEM ON ANY PLANET!!! THE INCREDIBLE LOOK AND PLAY LEAVE YOU NO CHOICE BUT TO GO OUT AND BUY THE GAME."
-GAME PLAYERS

"POWERPLAY HAMMERS FACEOFF OPPOSITION... RARELY DOES A VIDEO GAME DELIVER THE ESSENCE OF THE SPORT...POWERPLAY'S GRAPHICS AND GAMEPLAY SKATE AWAY WITH THE CUP."
-GAMEPRO

"POWERPLAY'S GAMEPLAY IS SECOND TO NONE."
-COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

"THE GAME THAT STOLE THE TORCH FROM EA'S NHL SERIES AND BROUGHT THE SPORT OF HOCKEY INTO THE 32-BIT AGE."
-NEXT GENERATION

"THE STRONGEST COMBINATION OF KILLER GRAPHICS AND SOLID GAMEPLAY TO DATE."
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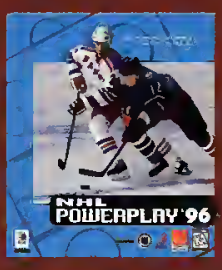

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ROBOTRON X™

MIDWAY

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Format:	**Sony PlayStation**
Launched:	**December 3, 1994**
U.S. Release Date:	**September 9, 1995**
Origin:	**Japan**
U.S. sales:	**1.7 million**
Worldwide sales:	**6.1 million**
U.S. titles:	**140 approx**
Worldwide titles:	**350 approx**
U.S. retail Price:	**$199**

PlayStation raced quickly to the head of the 32-bit pack. But now that Nintendo 64's joined the next-generation race, can Sony's first game system maintain its lead? With a large library of games, many say yes. But with a questionable software strategy and under-powered compared to its 64-bit rival, many also say no

THE STORY SO FAR

From nothing to greatness — PlayStation is a videogame success story. But can Sony successfully fend off the push from Nintendo 64?

When consumer electronics giant Sony decided to launch a game console, it didn't do it by halves — despite carrying the baggage of its ill-fated "partnership" with Nintendo to produce a CD-ROM drive for the Super NES. Now, PlayStation is the world's number one selling next-generation game console.

Sony was founded just after World War II, as a producer of value-priced consumer electronics. The company prospered in Japan's post-war boom, and, thanks to innovative developments like the Walkman and Trinitron TV picture tube, quickly grew. Despite some well publicized failures (Betamax and the ill-fated Columbia studios debacle are two "highlights"), the company has had a fairly good track record with new ventures — something the PlayStation story won't change.

The company's entry into the game industry was hastened by the arrival of Nintendo's Game Boy in 1989. Allegedly, Sony's head of R&D severely chastised his development teams, contending that "Game Boy should have been a Sony product!" In any event, Sony's mind was set, and its gaming initiative — which had previously amounted to half-heartedly promoting the doomed MMX home computing standard in the '80s and producing the NES and Super NES sound chips for Nintendo — began to gain momentum.

In 1988, 18 months prior to the launch of the Super NES, Sony had inked a deal with Nintendo to produce a CD-ROM drive for Super NES, based on a proprietary Sony format called Super Disc. In 1990, with Super NES looking as if it could equal the success of the world conquering 8-bit NES, Sony believed it had the foothold it had been looking for.

In addition to its collaboration with Nintendo, Sony planned another product based on the same SuperDisc format. The unit would be Sony-branded, be based on Nintendo's 16-bit Super NES architecture, and be called the PlayStation. The real advantage of this plan to Sony was that it would be the exclusive world-wide licensor for Super Disc format games, an arrangement which — unsurprisingly — irked Nintendo's ego.

Sony announced its deal with Nintendo to an eager games industry in Chicago on the first day of the Summer 1991 Consumer Electronics Show (CES). But in a nightmare scenario for Sony, Nintendo chose the second day of the show to reveal that it had changed its mind and was now planning a CD-ROM add-on for Super NES exclusively with Philips. Sony was hung out to dry, as Nintendo simultaneously thwarted a potential rival from entering the game industry through the back door, and allied itself with Philips's promising CD-I system.

"They stabbed us in the back," lamented Sony exec Olaf Olafsson at the time (as quoted in David Scheff's *Game Over*). Still, Sony went ahead with its Super NES-based PlayStation, hoping that details with Nintendo could be resolved. They weren't, and although the PlayStation reached the production stage, it was never shipped (two or three hundred still muster in Sony offices worldwide).

Sony's dreams of videogame domination didn't die with the original PlayStation, however, and a new 32-bit version of the system, code-named PlayStation X (or PS-X for short) was designed by Sony hardware guru Ken Kutaragi. Kutaragi, who had previously designed the Super NES sound hardware, had a vision, formed partly by his discussions with friends at Namco. The vision was for an exceptionally powerful home system, which would be optimized for 3D, easy to develop for, and "elegantly" designed.

His vision became PlayStation, his design was a triumph, and Sony — having learned from its Betamax debacle — backed it up with a superb launch on December 3, 1994, with games from a number of exclusive developers. What Sony lacked in in-house gaming expertise (its Sony Imagesoft efforts for Super NES and Genesis were atrocious), it made up for with a sweetheart deal with Namco, throwing money at Williams for the exclusive rights for *Mortal Kombat III*, and purchasing U.K.-based Psygnosis. Sure — Sony bought its way in, but the efforts have paid off.

Terry Tokunaka has led PlayStation to success — so far

Of the next-generation systems, PlayStation is top-ranked in Europe and the U.S. and remains neck-and-neck with Sega in Japan. It has an 18-month headstart on Nintendo, and early sales figures from Japan indicate that PlayStation sales have actually increased since Nintendo 64's launch.

MARKETING MUSCLE

After a launch that saw a sharp execution of a conventional videogame marketing strategy, Sony is now trying to break the mold

Total marketing budget, Oct-Dec 1996: $50 million

PlayStation's original 1995 U.S. marketing push was coordinated by agency Chiat-Day in L.A. (the same company that created Apple's "1984" Macintosh campaign). It aimed squarely at 17-year old males, under the (questionable) notion that older gamers, when they play, revert psychologically into 17-year olds the second the controller hits sweaty palm. After Sony's aborted attempt at creating a mascot, Polygon Man, the campaign used Sophia from *Toshinden* as PlayStation's mascot. The TV spots featured lightning fast jump-cuts, quick shots of gameplay, attitude-laden characters, and a taunting tagline: "You are not e" (red "e" — ready — geddit?). TV ads de-emphasized the Sony brand (presumably, gamers associated it Imagesoft dogs like *Johnny Mnemonic*). At point of purchase, however, the Sony name was more prominent, to lure in a more traditional audience (parents).

While we suppose it takes skill to come up with new ways to "shock" an increasingly jaded audience, Sony's initial campaign did nothing to challenge Sega's dominance. In 1996, however, things are different. Sega's ads seem to be haunted by the ideas of yesteryear, Nintendo's are typical too, but Sony's stand out.

The *Crash* ads, featuring an obvious "guy in a bandicoot suit" parading outside Nintendo's Seattle HQ appeal to many levels of gamers. Kids will like the big bandicoot with attitude, older gamers may appreciate the irony of the "guy in the suit" just doing his job and chatting with the guard as he is led away.

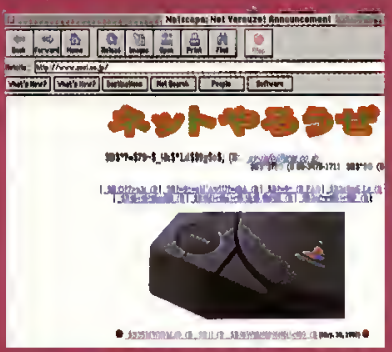
Sony's ads, by turn both cool and postmodern, have taken the lead from Sega in 1996

As for print and at point of purchase, Sony's materials are more orthodox, although we have to admit the ads for *Twisted Metal 2* are great.

So is Sony's marketing cool? Yes. As awesome as Sega's holiday '95 stuff? Not quite. But compared to the competition, Sony looks to walk away with the number one marketing spot this year, safe in the knowledge that PlayStation is still the "hippest" (if not the most powerful) console on the block.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Make you own PlayStation games? Is Sony serious? Yes, it is. And this could be the best peripheral yet seen



Until next month, when NG exclusively reveals the details of Sony's "Let's Create" program, very little Yarouze information is available

Let's Create (the name will change to Yarouze, which roughly translates as "do it!" before the system is released in the U.S. early next year) is Sony's best idea since PlayStation.

The system, which sells in Japan for $1,200, includes a special black PlayStation, a serial cable, and some software. Poof! Instant development kit. Write a game on your Mac or PC, play it on your PlayStation. Put the code online and anyone else with a Yarouze set-up can play your games. Sony will also sponsor an Internet-based club for Yarouze members to exchange programs and information.

One of the best things about the PC is that the barrier to entry as a developer is almost zero, meaning "some kid in a garage," has as much (if not more, since he or she is unfettered by marketing committees, bottom lines, and bureaucracy) chance of creating "the next big thing," as Id, Activision, or Microsoft. With Yarouze, Sony enables budding developers everywhere to work with the PlayStation. And since Sony has the right of first refusal on anything created with the kit, if some kid does do the next big thing using Yarouze, it will be exclusive to PlayStation.

Look for a world-exclusive in-depth feature on Yarouze and how you can make PlayStation games in next month's **Next Generation**.

TECHNOLOGY

It's no N64, but it's no slouch either

The PlayStation technology is largely the result of Ken Kutaragi's vision. While Sega was working on a new 2D console (Saturn was given a 3D processing boost only at the last minute) and Atari and 3DO thought that flat-shaded polygons would be more than anyone could ask for, Kutaragi asked where technology would be in five years, then built that system. He calls PlayStation a "graphics synthesizer," and its 3D strength — 300,000 polygons per second — is no accident.

No one should underestimate PlayStation's influence on the direction of game design in this decade, with PlayStation's early demonstrations of real, fast, textured, 3D worlds truly heralding a new era. The heart and soul of this performance is its dedicated GPU which the PC, with no affordable 3D accelerator of comparable performance, has yet to match.

Ken Kutaragi poses triumphantly with a prototype PlayStation board just before the system's launch

To bolster the system's raw polygon-pushing power, PlayStation offers game developers a straightforward development environment with hundreds of libraries (off-the-shelf code for doing specific things like, say, drawing trees quickly) for programmers to use. This has helped developers get up to speed quickly (*Ridge Racer* was translated from arcade to PlayStation in under six months), although it has led to a distinctive "PlayStation look" in many lower-budget titles that rely too heavily on the libraries. It has also led to speculation that while much of Saturn's power has yet to be harnessed, PlayStation is pretty much maxed out.

While this argument may hold some water, second-generation software such as *WipeOut XL*, *Formula One*, and *Destruction Derby 2* does much to blunt this damaging notion. Many 1996 PlayStation titles are clearly better than their 1995 counterparts — and are certainly no less improved than any of Sega's post-*Virtua Fighter 2* and *Sega Rally* output for Saturn.

Indeed, software design is improving constantly. With more developers incorporating superfast assembly language into their code (as opposed to programming exclusively in C), the real indicators of PlayStation's power — the finished games — continue to take dramatic steps forward.

However, PlayStation is ultimately a 32-bit system, and has to be considered — technologically speaking — weaker than Nintendo 64. So now the challenge for Sony is to make sure that PlayStation developers continue to build on prior success, and maximize its two year headstart over Nintendo 64 up the 3D development curve.

TECH SPECS

The tale of the tape is revealed

PERIPHERALS
- Joystick
- ller
- Card
- Cable
- with Pad
- r
- dapter
- Unit

CPU
- 000A
- -bit RISC processor @ 3 8688M
- rating performance 30 MIPS
- on Cache 4 KB
- Cache - 1 KB
- 32 MB/sec.

CD-ROM DRIVE
- Transfer Rate (DMA TO RAM)
- 150 KB/sec. (Normal)
- 300 KB/sec. (Double speed)
- m Capacity 660 Megabytes
- dio CD play
- Interactive Audio

GRAPHICAL CAPABILITY
- Display Resolution:

Resolution (H x V)
256x480
320x480
384x480
512x480
640x480

- cod)

256x480
320x480
384x480
512x480
640x480

COLOR DEPTH

Colors
16
256
32,768
16,777,216

- s are performed to 24-bit
- Texture mapping color mode.
- (16 Colors)
- (256 Colors)
- (32768 Colo·s)

2D GRAPHICAL CAPABILITY
- display capability: 1x1 pixels to
- 6 pixels

SPRITE SIZE

BIT DEPTH

	4-bit	8-bit	16-bit
	40K	70K	110K
	160K	280K	640K

DATA DECOMPRESSION ENGINE (MDEC)
- Operating performance - 80 MIPS
- Directly connected to CPU bus
- Hardware video decompression

HARDWARE RENDERED POLYGONS (GPU)
- Up to 360,000 polygons/sec.
- Texture mapping
- Flat or Gouraud shading

INPUT/OUTPUT SYSTEM OVERVIEW
- Control Pad
- Two control pad connectors
- Expandable with multitap connecto
- Backup RAM
- Two removable cards
- 128 KB Flash Memory
- OS suppo t for File Save, Retrieve
- Remove
- Serial Port I/O
- Link Cable Connectivity

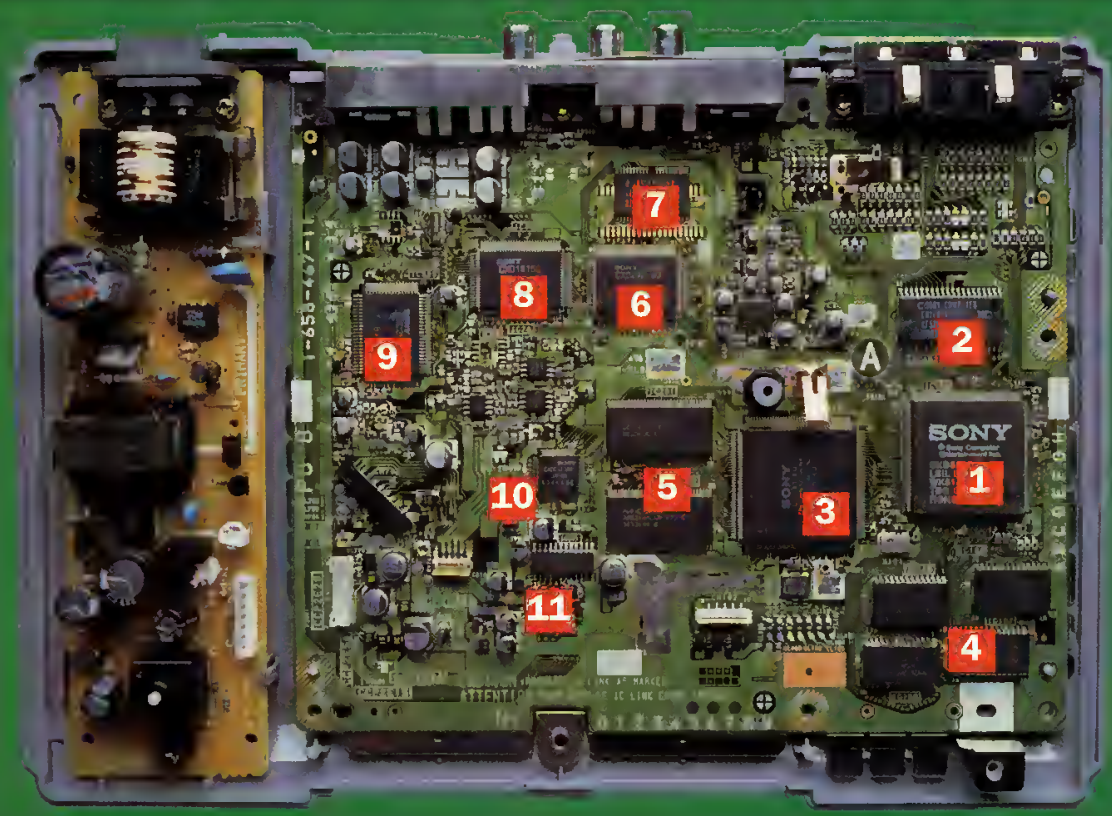
MEMORY CONFIGURATION
- Main RAM: 2 Megabytes
- Video RAM: 1 Megabyte
- Sound RAM. 512 Kilobytes
- CD ROM buffer: 32 Kilobytes
- OS ROM 512 Kilobytes

SOUND PROCESSOR
- 24 Channels
- 44.1KHz sample rate
- PCM audio source
- Digital effects nclude.
  - Envelope
  - Looping
  - Digital Reverb
- Supports MIDI Instruments

SPRITE AND BACKGROUND GRAPHICS
- Virtually Unlimited:
  - Size (up to 256 x 256)
  - Number of sprites on a line
  - Number of sprite images
  - Number of CLUTs

SPRITE SPECIAL EFFECTS
- Rotation
- Scaling up/down
- Warping
- Transparency
- Fading
- Priority
- Vertical line scroll
- Horizontal line scroll

UNDER THE HOOD



The PlayStation's motherboard has been only subtly updated since its launch, with component changes in the power supply being the most "exciting" tweaks. Here's a run down on the chips under PlayStation's hood:

1	CPU (a 33 MHz R3000 running at 30MIPS) containing the 66MIPS Geometry Transfer Engine (GTE), the DMA controller, and Sony's 80MIPS proprietary MDEC video decompression hardware. MDEC gives full-screen high-quality video playback and can also decompress graphics into RAM
2	Operating System ROM, initiating the boot-up sequences on switching-on (this is where the start-up sound and PlayStation logo is stored)
3	GPU (Graphics Processing Unit) handling everything that's drawn onscreen
4	2MB DRAM (main RAM)
5	1MB VRAM (video RAM)
6	16-bit sound processing unit delivering 24 channels of ADPCM @ 44.1 KHz
7	512KB sound RAM
8	CD controller, containing a CD-ROM-XA converter (enabling up to eight simultaneous streams of mixed audio and CD data) and buffer RAM
9	Digital Signal Processor (DSP) for CD drive. This chip has been upgraded slightly since the launch of the unit
10	16-bit digital audio converter
11	Video decoder and encoder. NTSC (U.S.) or PAL (Europe) signal decoder, sending signal to TV

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PlayStation

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GAMES

So why is it so hard to find 15 great PlayStation games?

Although there is a big selection of good games for PlayStation, there are worryingly few "classics." It seems that Sony has all its bases covered, but with the possible exceptions of *Wipeout* and maybe *Tekken 2*, it has yet to find its *Sonic the Hedgehog* or *Mario*.

With its developer-friendly environment (it's relatively straightforward to make PlayStation games) and dominant market position, PlayStation is the first priority of most developers, and the only choice for those with limited resources. Sounds good, right? Not necessarily. The system that attracts developers because "it's easier," is also going to tend to attract not only developers of the second and third tier, but also publishers who are interested in simply rushing out as many cookie-cutter games as possible.

Of course, not all PlayStation developers are second-string or merely after a fast buck. But it does mean that when Sony brags of "over 140" titles in PlayStations library, it's good to remember that it's quality, not quantity, that ultimately counts (at least, once all game genres are well represented — take note Nintendo).

Also, since PlayStation is currently the dominant platform, any third-party developer with the money to publish on just one platform will pick PlayStation. Fine, but there are far more bad games made than there are great games, and unfortunately PlayStation gets them all (Sega, on the other hand, often gets only the best of these games converted for play on Saturn).

There is another troubling factor. Sony Computer Entertainment America has a somewhat suspect policy of approving (all PlayStation release have to be rubber-stamped by Sony officials) only games that showcase Sony's 3D capabilities. While this worked well at launch to show off PlayStation's graphic capabilities and differentiate itself from Saturn, this strategy ain't gonna work against N64. Compounding this problem is an increasing dissatisfaction with 3D games (as articulated by Eugene Jarvis in **NG 21**). Perhaps Sony would be smart to reexamine its position.

All that said, PlayStation will have the broadest library of quality software this holiday season, and probably throughout 1997. No matter what a user's taste, he or she will find something to like on PlayStation. Thus for fans of lesser genres like, say, wrestling games, N64 is simply not an option (and this is why Sony and Sega are promoting their "100+" titles as hard as they can). Also, with a packed stable of software in the standard genres, Sony can afford to devote promotional effort to more esoteric titles, like ArtDink's *Tail of the Sun* or *PaRappa the Rapper*.

Namco's support was key in PlayStation's early days. A nearly perfect version of *Ridge Racer* was completed by the company in only six months

Finally, despite N64's 64-bit graphic power, PlayStation's should not be underestimated. Some second-generation titles are very impressive (*WipeOut XL* looks almost — almost — as good as *WaveRace 64*), the sports market that drove the success of Genesis is now owned by PlayStation, and there are some fantastic games on PlayStation that simply have not been done as well on competing platforms. *NFL GameDay 2*, *Tekken 2*, *Jumping Flash2!* (notice they are all sequels) are great, great games — and only available on PlayStation. But how quickly will N64's library catch up?

Tekken 2

Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco
Released: Out Now

Namco's answer to *Virtua Fighter 2* is better on PlayStation than in arcades, thanks to additional modes (first-person and training). The debate about *Tekken 2* vs. *VF2* still rages at NG's office, but all acknowledge *T2*'s dominance on PS-X

NFL GameDay '97

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: SCEA
Released: Out Now

Last year, with EA's *Madden* out of the picture, Sony had a perfect opportunity to steal the videogame football title. It did just this, with a surprisingly impressive game that brought football up to 32-bit speed. The '97 update looks even better

Jumping Flash! 2

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: SCEI
Released: Out Now

Before *Mario*, the *Jumping Flash!* series was the sterling example of how to do a platform game in 3D — and it's still the best example on PlayStation. Innovative gameplay, quirky graphics and music added up to a critical (if not commercial) hit

GAMES

Destruction Derby 2

Publisher: SCEA
Dev: Psygnosis
Released: Out Now

The first *Destruction Derby* had plenty of flash, but not much depth — a problem common to first-generation PlayStation software. Thankfully, the sequel has flash *and* depth, and offers PlayStation gamers an excellent fun driving experience

Battle Arena Toshinden 2

Pub: Playmates
Developer: Takara
Released: Out Now

Still immensely popular, the *Toshinden* series shows no sign of slowing down. The title makes maximum use of the PlayStation's special effects and offers gamers an element of fantasy and magic with their — albeit limited — 3D fighting

Final Fantasy 7

Publisher: SCEA
Dev: Square Soft
Released: Q4 1997

Stealing Square from Nintendo was the coup of the year for Sony. *Final Fantasy 7* looks to be the most impressive console RPG ever, and having it exclusively for PlayStation is a guarantee of loyal fans in the Japanese and American markets

Tomb Raider

Publisher: EIDOS
Developer: Core
Released: Out Now

Tomb Raider (with hoards of levels, immensely deep gameplay, and stunning graphics) takes the *Prince of Persia* and *Fleshback* genre, and drags it kicking and screaming into the 3D world. The result is a triumph of classic gameplay

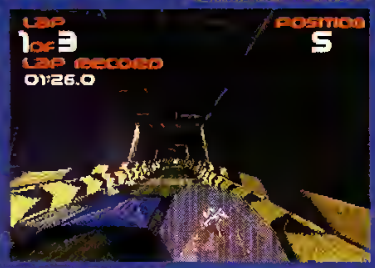
NHL Face-Off '97

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: SCEA
Released: Out Now

As one of the remnants of the old ImageSoft, SCEA's sports division had a lot to prove last year. But it rose to the challenge, and titles like *NHL Face Off '97* should show that Sony Sports has the staying power to play in the big leagues

Wipeout XL

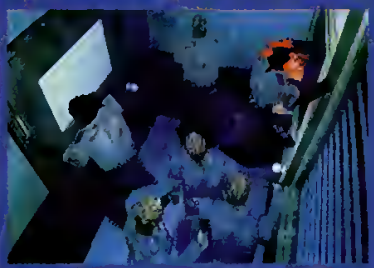
Publisher: SCEA
Dev: Psygnosis
Released: Out Now



No other game better defines PlayStation. *Wipeout XL* offers a fast-paced, techno soundtrack over a graphically stunning 3D race game. Obviously inspired by Nintendo's 16-bit *F-Zero*, this is as good as 32-bit racing games get

Resident Evil

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Released: Out Now



Taking the *Alone in the Dark* motif to the next level, Capcom scored a major hit with *Resident Evil* (it's the world's top-selling PlayStation game). If Capcom uses the profits to hire better voice talent, the *Resident Evil* franchise could run and run

PaRappa the Rapper

Publisher: Sony
Dev: SonyMusic
Released: Q4 1996

You're a flat dog in a 3D world. You're trying to get the girl (she's a flat flower). How do you do it? You gotta believe! And you have to sing a bunch of rap songs. It's awesome, trust us. It's quirky titles like this that keep the PlayStation library fresh and diverse

Tobal No.1

Pub: SCEA
Developer: Square
Released: Out Now

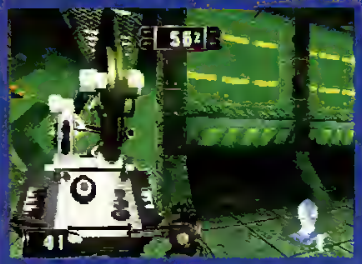
Published in the U.S. by Sony, this Gouraud-shaded fighter is a landmark in speed and high resolution graphics. If anything, this is PlayStation's answer to *Virtua Fighter 2*, and marks the first fruits of Sony's marriage to Square

GAMES

WarCraft 2 — Publisher: EA, Developer: Blizzard, Released: Q2 1997

Warcraft 2 did phenomenally well on the PC, but Blizzard has wisely passed the tricky console conversion on to EA. How to translate the game's multiplayer appeal is the big question, and will make the difference between a hit or a miss

Disruptor — Pub: Universal, Dev: Universal, Released: Out Now



OK, OK, it looks a lot like *Doom*, but *Disruptor* is unique (and exclusive) to PlayStation, and has some of the finest level design and puzzles we've seen in a *Doom* clone. Also, the addition of psionics to the game is a nice touch

Crash Bandicoot — Pub: SCEA, Dev: Naughty Dog, Released: Out Now

OK, so essentially it's just the same old 2D platform game that we've been playing for years. But it sure looks good, and there's no denying *Crash Bandicoot*'s appeal to kids. But does Sony really want to put it up against *Super Mario 64*?

CONCLUSION

PlayStation: Worthy champion, or success by default?

Up until the arrival of Nintendo 64 in late September of this year, PlayStation's debut on September 9, 1995 was the most successful videogame launch in U.S. history (Sony shifted 100,000 PlayStations in one weekend; 300,000 Nintendo 64s were sold over four days). Currently, there are 1.7 million PlayStations in the U.S. and over 6 million worldwide. Even Nintendo acknowledges that it will be impossible for N64 to catch up before this time next year. So on a global basis, PlayStation will be leading the pack for the foreseeable future.

So is PlayStation a success story by default? Certainly, Sega is offering less competition by the day, and up until very recently Sony's ascension to the top of the heap was blissfully Nintendo-free. Last year, we suggested that PlayStation's first two years of empire building were like a game of *SimCity* with "disasters" turned off — the analogy still fits, but now "disasters" are very much turned on. It's only going to get tougher for Sony from this point on.

But this picture doesn't give Sony the credit it deserves. PlayStation is a fine videogame console and offers great value for money at $199 (even more if it drops to $149 as many pundits predict). And there's no real reason why PlayStation can't continue to thrive even as Nintendo 64 gets up to speed. Positioned as a low-budget alternative to Nintendo 64, if Sony realizes the potential for cheaper software (born of using CDs instead of cartridges as its software medium) and continues to provide a breadth of games beyond that of Nintendo, there's no reason why it should ever surrender its lead. Indeed, with Sony courting the older gamer and Nintendo sticking to its core child audience, the market could be neatly divided in half.

In conclusion, if the magic of *Super Mario 64* is lost on you, you enjoy the flexibility and choice that a wide range of software offers, and you're not prepared to wait the 12 months it will take for a comparable Nintendo 64 line-up, then PlayStation should be your number one pick this holiday season.

PlayStation

Demonstrable hardware power ★★★½

Current software library ★★★½

Future software prognosis ★★★½

Marketing muscle ★★★★

Overall future prognosis ★★★★

Final score ★★★★

GET OFF YOUR ASS, PRINCESS. THIS IS WAR.

Vialence. Explasians. Profanity. It's a game designed ta became an absessian.

Drink beer, visit exatic lands, kill the inhabitants.

Amazing Artificial Intelligence plays like it's gat ane. (A big ane.)

Sadist. Megalomaniac. Slightly less than attractive. Meet Commander Zod. You'll answer to him as you lead armies of beer-swilling, drunken robot soldiers from planet to planet, destroying everything that stands in your way. The game is called *Z*. It's got the depth of a strategy game, and the balls of an action game. Featuring the most realistic explosions out there, over 35 minutes of 3-D scenes and multi-player options for network and modem play. *Z*. Drink beer. Blow stuff up. It's going to get ugly. Really ugly.

"The action in *Z* can be described in one word: intense." *PC Gamer*

"Humorous, fast-paced and crowded with dismembered body parts and debris, *Z* promises to be a very stressful and challenging title that ups the ante on real-time wargaming." *Computer Gaming World*

"...Forget *Warcraft*; this game offers strategy, action and humor with an incredible A.I. to back it all up." *Fusion*

Commander Zod is waiting. www.vie.com

Z ©1996 The Bitmap Brothers. Licensed exclusively to Virgin Interactive Entertainment, Inc. From Renegade Software, a Warner Interactive Company. Virgin is a registered trademark of Virgin Enterprises, Ltd.

They're drunk. They're stupid. They're on your side.

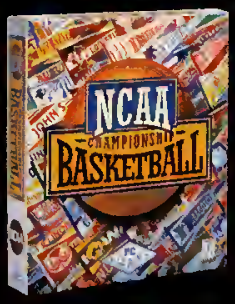
It's a fight for Zod, for country and for beer. (Not necessarily in that order.)

PC CD-ROM

Advanced artificial intelligence lets you grow players from freshman to senior year.

Network and modem options let you challenge your friends for season or tournament play.

Extensive recruiting feature let's you rebuild your team after each season of play.



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GTE Entertainment

64 Division I Teams

Network and Modem - to - Modem Play

Extensive Recruiting

3D SGI Graphics

March Madness℠

National Champion

KIDS TO ADULTS
AGES 6+

PC CD-ROM

NCAA

Format:	**Sega Saturn**
Launched:	**November 22, 1994**
U.S. Release Date:	**May 11, 1995**
Origin:	**Japan**
U.S. sales:	**900,000**
Worldwide sales:	**4.1 million**
U.S. titles:	**125 approx**
Worldwide titles:	**240 approx**
U.S. retail Price:	**$199**

Two years ago, Sega's 16-bit Genesis was on top of the videogame world. Now, with slow Saturn sales, a shortage of killer games, Sonic the Hedgehog on the injury list, and Sony and Nintendo gathering strength, Sega's looking third place dead in the face. Can it regain its lead? Can three systems survive? Will third be good enough?

THE STORY SO FAR

Two years ago, at the start of videogaming's next generation, Sega was the hot favorite. 3DO was dead, Jaguar was dying, Nintendo was late, and Sony had no videogame experience. So what the hell went wrong?

The Sega Saturn was the first and only 32-bit game system to come from a dominant player in the 16-bit era. And compared to the next-generation offerings of the time — 3DO and Jaguar — it was a leap ahead of the pack. It became immediately obvious that Saturn's technology was superior to anything else available at the time, and *Virtua Fighter* showcased it well.

Maybe a week is a long time in politics, but in the next-generation videogame race the 11 days after November 22, 1994 must have seemed barely more than a heartbeat for Sega, because on December 3 PlayStation joined the war. With Saturn fortified by a seemingly insatiable Japanese appetite for all things *Virtua Fighter*, the two systems have fought head to head in Japan ever since, and there is still no clear leader with both sides claiming Japanese sales of around 3 million.

Despite a surprise early launch in the U.S. on May 11, 1995, Saturn's U.S. assault was crippled from the start by a prohibitive price tag ($399 — a price that only a few months earlier Tom Kalinske, in a **Next Generation** interview, had admitted would appeal only to a "very, very limited market"), a meagre initial software lineup, a distinct lack of *Virtua Fighter* fever in the U.S., the perception that the Saturn hardware was marginally inferior to that of PlayStation — and (duh) no one knowing that it was coming. Sony bullishly claimed that it overtook Saturn's four-month headstart on just its first weekend of sales following September 9. And despite rallying magnificently with *Virtua Fighter 2*, *Sega Rally*, and *Virtua Cop* last holiday season, and occasional sales spikes following price drops and hot software releases, Saturn has never shown any sign of reliving its 15 minutes of fame.

Sega was founded in Japan in 1954 by an American, David Rosen, an ex-airman who had been stationed in Tokyo during the Korean War (see page 6), and Sega was one of the first developers of electronic arcade games (early hits included *Zaxxon*, *Sub-Rock*, and *Turbo*). The rest, of course, is history. After the dismal performance of Sega's 8-bit Master System, the Genesis — backed by then-president Tom Kalinske's ultra-hip (and often imitated) marketing campaign and a killer app in the form of Yuji Naka's *Sonic the Hedgehog* — established itself as the cool 16-bit system to own and stole over half the U.S. videogame market from under Nintendo's nose.

The American, Japanese, and "white" special edition Saturns (above). The "white" Saturn featured a streamlined internal design and was released at a lower price point in Japan (U.S. gamers had to make do with stickers at retail to inform them of the change). Sega's Tokyo headquarters (right) remains the center of most Saturn development

Always cognizant of the fact that new technology generates headlines and stimulates interest, Sega attempted to keep 16-bit alive even as the introduction of Saturn was being planned. Sega launched several hardware add-ons for the Genesis, including the Sega CD, Activator "VR" controller, Menacer light gun, and 32X 32-bit "upgrade." This add-on strategy failed and only served to dilute what user base it had. Not only were most of the add-ons dismal products in and of themselves, they were supported, if at all, with software that was well below B-quality. The result was a black eye for Sega's reputation and a loss of consumer confidence in a company that only a year or so before was proclaimed, on the covers of *Wired* and *Business Week*, "The Next Big Thing." Hence Saturn was somewhat crippled from the start.

The development of the Saturn hardware itself is also somewhat foreboding. In its initial incarnation, Saturn bore a strong resemblance to the specs that would become 32X. Indeed, the original successor to the Genesis was designed a long time before its launch. During the hype surrounding the unveiling of The 3DO Company's 32-bit technology, Sega's Tom Kalinske bragged that "we have a 32-bit machine waiting in the wings" — his point being that it was the wrong time to launch a 32-bit system.

Unfortunately, when it finally was the right time, Saturn had, to some extent, withered on the vine. It was only in 1993 after Sega officials discovered the direction of PlayStation development that serious 3D capabilities were incorporated into the design (allegedly after an enraged Mr. Nakayama severely chastised members of the development team). The twin Hitachi CPUs bolted on as a last-minute fix somewhat explain why many find Saturn's innards "clumsy."

Now, with Nintendo 64 released, PlayStation holding its own, and its 16-bit cash cow looking decidedly slimmer each day, Sega finds itself in the most precarious home market position it has been in since the days of the Master System. Can Sega bounce back, or will Saturn be the TurboGrafx-16 of the next generation?

MARKETING MUSCLE

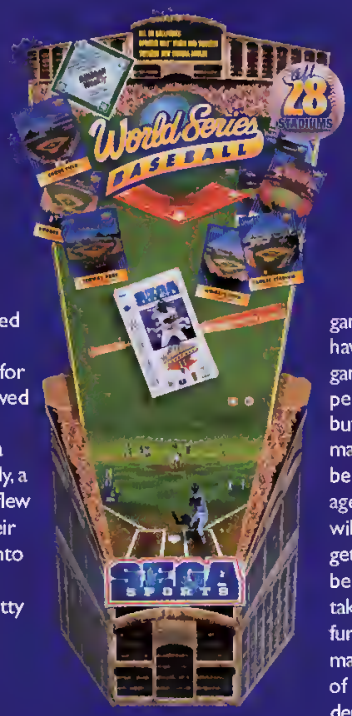
Can the kings of videogame TV ads ("Sega!") pull Saturn back from the brink of failure?

Total marketing budget, Oct-Dec: $60 million

Ever since it picked Goodby, Berlin & Silverstein as its ad agency in 1992, Sega has been known for its cutting-edge ads. In fact, nearly every videogame ad campaign since Genesis has stolen from Sega's shock-style campaigns to a greater or lesser extent. The patented "Sega!" yell and "Welcome to the next level" helped sell a generation of gamers on the Genesis, and Sega's strategy of directly comparing itself to the dowdy Nintendo was a radical and successful departure in strategy for a Japanese company.

But any ad or marketing campaign gets tired fast, so Sega adopted a different strategy for the launch of Saturn. First were the flat-out weird "Theater of the Eye" spots with an "It's out there" message, then came the astounding "A Little Too Real" campaign. The TV spots featured live action intros, followed by quick, jump cuts of gameplay. For instance, for *Sega Rally*, the spot showed two "extreme" mountaineers climbing a mountain, when suddenly, a car cut from *Sega Rally* flew off the top and over their heads, before plunging into the abyss. The spot for *Virtua Cop* featured a gritty atmospheric black and white shot of two cops heading towards certain death in a warehouse ambush. Sega's then marketing director, Tim Dunley, described the shots as "more NYPD Blue than MTV."

Hands down, the campaign was the best yet seen for a videogame system.



And while it helped Sega to an acceptable holiday season last year, it didn't do enough to overcome the PlayStation's lead. That may be why, this holiday season, Sega will be bringing back the Sega Scream, and a new "in-your-face" shock campaign. Snore.

The trouble is that while Sega pioneered this style, it is now extremely tired, and the new spots just seem very "me too." Especially when they are trying to promote games that simply do not have that style in their gameplay. MTV was perfect for spunky *Sonic*, but not for mild-mannered *Nights*. It may be that Sega's new agency, Ingalls-Moranville will take some time to get up to speed, it may be that Sega is afraid of taking risks and falling further behind Sony, it may be that the top level of Sega's marketing department was purged after E3, or it may just be bad luck — but what we've seen of Sega's marketing campaign this holiday season is simply not the impressive, innovative stuff we have come to expect from Sega.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Is Sega's NetLink a way to differentiate and add value to Saturn, or just a next-generation 32X?

The NetLink itself is a diminutive, well designed piece of hardware, not like the ungainly Sega CD or 32X

Although Sega has an exceptionally poor track record with hardware add-ons, this holiday season it's ready to try it again. This time, though, its product looks more impressive than in years past.

NetLink is a 28.8k baud modem for Saturn that attaches through the cartridge port, comes with browser software on a CD, and lets you surf the web via your TV. The software is impressive, and at under $200, NetLink and Saturn combined truly make a network "PC" for under $500.

Although NetLink will enable network gameplay and connection to online services (X-Band Saturn is up in Japan and planned for the U.S.), so far no games support it. So for now, NetLink simply enables users to browse the web on a TV. Quite how much this constitutes the elusive "killer app" remains to be seen, but one thing is clear: With the release of NetLink, Sega has walked where, for the longest time, computer industry visionaries have only talked.

So will gamers (or anyone else) bite? It's unknown, but Sega deserves credit for trying. Hopefully, NetLink isn't merely the next add-on in its increasingly full closet of shame.

TECHNOLOGY

Saturn: hidden depth or in over its head?

The Saturn was designed from the start to be economical, so the designers at Sega made an early decision to use only off the shelf parts and eschew any custom chips — this immediately compromises the technology. To get an acceptable level of 3D power, a dual processor system was introduced late in Saturn's development. However, because the dual processors both need to access the same memory cache, it is difficult — if not impossible — to get the processors running in true parallel, especially when using a high-level language like C (programming in assembly language is the only way to get truly fast results). "It's a real coder's machine," said Andy Beveridge, designer of the PSY-Q development system for Saturn at the time of its launch, "but it's going to take some time before we see what it can really do."

Ultimately, it's obvious that Saturn was designed at the apex of the 2D side-scrolling/fighting game heyday and did not anticipate the brave new world of the third dimension. Trying to compete with PlayStation's 3D power, Saturn somewhat resembles your dad trying to dance to techno.

This, coupled with the fact that there is almost no operating system for the Saturn — giving programmers direct access to almost 100% of the hardware — makes developing for the Saturn extremely troublesome (as illustrated by the first generation of software). Shortly after launch, AM2 head Yu Suzuki remarked, "I think only one in 100 programmers are good enough to get [the same speed AM2 has] out of the Saturn."

These programming headaches, Saturn's lack of PlayStation's sophisticated hardware graphics features (such as transparency), and the lackluster quality of the first Saturn software made consumers perceive the system as inferior to Sony's PlayStation.

However, two things have changed. First, Sega of Japan released several new AM2 developed graphics libraries, and two, developers are now more used to the machine's complex architecture. Titles like *Nights* and *Power Play* show that while the Saturn may not be as glitzy as the PlayStation, it is no 32X.

Saturn technology may lack both the immediate brute force and custom features of N64 or PlayStation, but it is capable of more than we've seen. The question is, will we ever see it?

Yu Suzuki's AM2 developed libraries for Saturn have shown more of the hardware's potential

TECH SPECS

Greater than the sum of its (many) parts?

PERIPHERALS
Analog mission joystick
[illegible] racer analog steering controller
Analog/digital switchable controller
Analog joypad
Memory backup cart
[illegible] cable (Japan)
[illegible]e with pad
[illegible] modem
[illegible] adapter
[illegible] adapter
[illegible] unit

CPUs
[illegible] Hitachi 32-bit RISC SH2s @ 28 MHz
[illegible] Hitachi 32-bit SH1

CD-ROM DRIVE
Data transfer rate:
150 KB/sec. (Normal)
300 KB/sec. (Double speed)
Maximum Capacity - 660 Megabytes
Features:
Audio CD w/reactive display
CD+G Compatible
CD+EG Compatible
CD Single Compatible
Photo CD
Video CD
EBook

2D GRAPHICAL CAPABILITY
VDP1 processor handles:
sprites
polygons
geometry
"VDP" processor handles
backgrounds
5 simultaneous planes (with two rotation planes)
32,000 colors from 24-bit palette

NTSC Display Resolution
352x224
640x224
704x480

MEMORY CONFIGURATION
Main RAM: 2 Megabytes
Video RAM: 1.54 Megabyte
[illegible]und RAM 540 Kilobytes
CD ROM buffer 512 Kilobytes

SOUND PROCESSOR
16-bit Yamaha 68EC000 @ 113 MHz
32 voices
FM synthesis
[illegible] CPU interfaces
44.1 KHz sampling frequency
16 channel digital mixer
SCSP 128 step DSP @ 22.6MHz

GEOMETRY ENGINE
Supplied by VDP 1:
Texture mapping
Gouraud Shading
512K cache for textures
200,000 texture-mapped [illegible]
500,000 flat shaded polys/sec

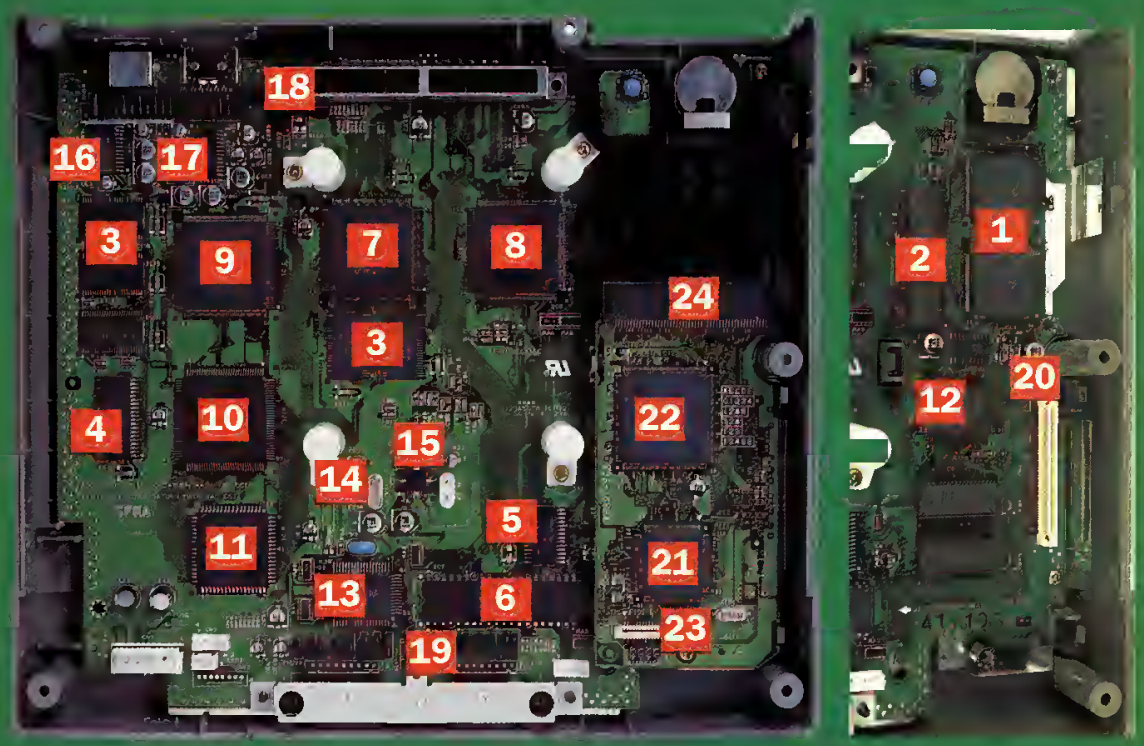
SPRITE GRAPHICS
Supplied by VDP 1:
Dual 256K frame buffers for rotation and scaling
Virtually unlimited number of sprites on a line
Virtually unlimited number of sprite images
Virtually unlimited number of CLUTs

SPRITE SPECIAL EFFECTS
Supplied by VDP 1:
Rotation
Scaling up/down
Warping
Vertical and horizontal line scroll

BACKGROUND AND SCROLL PLANES
Supplied by VDP 2:
Background engine
Up to five simultaneous scrolling backgrounds
Up to two simultaneous rotating playfields
True 24-bit backgrounds
704x480 maximum resolution

Saturn's specs are not unimpressive. But will it be able to handle VF3? Don't count on it

UNDER THE HOOD



The Saturn hardware has undergone streamlining revisions, but this photo shows the old system schematic, which is useful both in showing the original design of the system, and in showing the various components in more detail, as the functionality of many chips have since been combined into larger integrated chips:

1) 2 Hitachi 25 MIP SH2s running at 28 MHz
2) 16 Mbit DRAM for SH2s
3) 12 Mbit DRAM for the VRAM and frame buffer
4) 512 K sound DRAM for the 68EC00
5) 32 K SRAM for battery back-up
6) 512 K Initial Program Loading ROM — for the Saturn's power-up sequence
7) VDP1 32-bit video display processor, sprite processor and texture-mapping engine with dual 256 K frame buffers
8) VDP2 32-bit video display processor with five simultaneous scrolling backgrounds and two simultaneous rotation fields
9) Processor Controller
10) Saturn Custom Sound Processor (SCSP). Contains Yamaha FH1 DSP
11) 22.6 MHz MC68EC00 sound processor
12) System control unit running at 14MHz
13) 4-bit system manager and peripheral control
14) Crystal oscillator
15) Integrated circuit clock controller
16) Digital-to-analog converter
17) RGB encoder
18) Cartridge slot
19) Connector for joypad
20) Connector for CD interface
21) SH1 processor for CD drive
22) MPEG interface
23) CD drive board interface
24) 100-pin CD-drive board connector

The darkness of ancient Egypt and evil alien forces, possessing horrifying powers, have taken possession of the ancient city of Karnak. And these landlords are exacting extremely high rents. Like an arm and a leg…or worse.

Airdropped into first person landscapes, you must swim, crawl and otherwise run like hell through **20-plus levels** of gameplay. **Real time, fully 3-D rendered environments** allow you complete 360° freedom of gameplay. With just a machete to begin with, search for 7 **other weapons** like hand grenades, a flame thrower, an M60 machine gun and a magical cobra staff. **Dynamic lighting** allows for stunning visual effects. Cross bridges, crawl through tunnels and swim through underwater grottos. Your only salvation is the guiding Spirit of the Great Pharaoh Ramses. He's the only one in this god-forsaken neighborhood who wants to help you get a forwarding address.

So welcome to the nightmare of Ramses' tomb. And enjoy your stay. It may last forever.

POWERSLAVE

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PlayStation

SEGA SATURN

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GAMES

Arcade conversions abound. But what else is there?

After a disappointing initial software offering (only *Daytona USA* and *Virtua Fighter* provided any reason to look twice at Saturn), the quality of software greatly improved throughout 1995. The culmination of these efforts was *Virtua Fighter 2* and *Sega Rally* — two games that temporarily silenced most critics of the system. But then development progress stopped, and other than *Fighting Vipers* and Yuji Naka's *Nights*, there's precious little for Saturn fans to brag about in 1996. *Sonic Extreme* was abandoned (replaced by a version of the Genesis game), *Hearts of Darkness* has been delayed, *Daytona Remix* won't arrive until 1997, and even if *Command & Conquer* does appear in 1996, it won't be NetLink compatible.

Saturn's problem is a lack of third-party support. Because PlayStation is easier to develop for, and has a larger installed base, most companies with limited resources will choose to develop for PlayStation first, and (if they have a smaller development budget) sometimes exclusively. Admittedly, this means that PlayStation owners are used as guinea pigs for games that may or may not appear on the Saturn, but at least they get the games first — and the originals are usually the best (a software developer's "A" team won't work on mere ports).

Yuji Naka's *Sonic* Team hit it big with *Nights*, and, although it is outselling *Mario* week-on-week in Japan and has sold well in America, it cannot carry Saturn all by itself

Of course, Saturn does have one major weapon that PlayStation and N64 don't have — full exclusive rights to Sega's awesome arcade output. This alone is responsible for Saturn's success so far, but the supply of killer arcade games for conversion is slowing. It's naive to think that *Virtua Fighter 3* on Saturn will in any way resemble its arcade parent, and the rest of Sega's arcade line-up lacks the dynamite or innovation that made *Sega Rally* and *Virtua Cop* such surprise hits.

Sony's policy of nixing any software submitted for approval that doesn't showcase PlayStation's 3D capabilities has handed Saturn the 2D market, free of charge. A growing library of impressive and exclusive 2D games, like LucasArts's *Herc's Adventures*, Capcom's *Major Damage*, or Working Design's *Lunar* have all cemented Saturn's standing as the niche platform of choice for 2D game fans.

If Saturn didn't exclusively have Sega's arcade line-up, then it's software library would be sorely lacking. But, it does have these games, it has all the genre bases (sports, adventure, platform, and so on) covered with strong titles, and it does 2D better than any other system. But, despite all of this, it can't compete with Nintendo 64's bells and whistles; 2D games aren't as popular as 3D games, and the reservoir of arcade hits appears to be drying up.

1997 will be exceedingly tough for Saturn from a software point of view.

Virtua Fighter 2

Publisher: Sega
Dev: Sega AM2
Released: Out Now

AM2's nearly flawless arcade translation offered the first proof that Saturn was as powerful as Sega insisted, and also led Sega's holiday charge in 1995. A year later, the still impressive *Virtua Fighter 2* has yet to be surpassed on Saturn

Nights

Publisher: Sega
Dev: "Sonic Team"
Released: Out Now

From Yuji Naka's *Sonic* Team, *Nights* (and its analog joystick) offers a 2D game in a 3D world. Sure, it may not have the immediate appeal of 1991's *Sonic the Hedgehog*, but it's Sega's main weapon in '96, and, to many, Saturn's finest hour

Sega Rally

Publisher: Sega
Dev: Sega AM3
Released: Out Now

After the disappointing *Daytona USA*, *Sega Rally* was a welcome relief. With awesome gameplay (compatible with Sega's analog joystick) there is still little to compete with this example of Sega's arcade racing brilliance

GAMES

Fighting Vipers

Publisher: Sega
Dev: Sega AM2
Released: Out Now

Unfortunately for *Fighting Vipers*, although it is as good a port as *Virtua Fighter 2*, the game itself lacks *VF2*'s appeal (despite the option to fight as a giant bear). Consequently, 'Vipers isn't as powerful a weapon for Sega this holiday season

NHL PowerPlay '97

Publisher: Virgin
Developer: Radical
Released: Out Now

Also available on PlayStation, this hockey sim is unique in that it is the only game that is better on Saturn than it is on PlayStation. *PowerPlay* features awesome motion capture, stunning opponent AI, and a surprisingly cool replay system

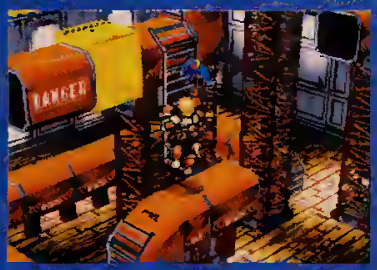
World Series Baseball 2

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sega
Released: Out Now

Sony may have stolen the sports crown from Electronic Arts and Sega, but there are still some top sports games on Saturn. Hands down, *WSB2* is the best baseball game we've played, especially since it now has all the U.S. ballparks

Dark Savior

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Climax
Released: Jan '97



This 3D action/RPG looks to be one of the genre's most exciting 1997 releases — and it's only on Saturn. Climax has a stellar reputation in Japan (since the success of *Landstalker*) and *Dark Savior* will only increase Climax's stature

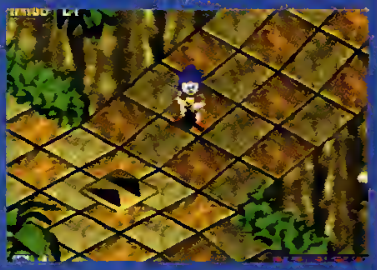
Virtua Cop

Publisher: Sega
Dev: Sega AM2
Released: Out Now

"The best light gun game ever" neatly describes this title. The use of polygons enables contextually appropriate actions when an enemy is hit, which creates a much more immersive experience than is found with less sophisticated titles in the genre

Sonic 3D Blast

Pub: Sega
Dev: STI
Released: Out Now



Imagine a 16-bit game hastily converted to replace *Sonic Extreme* (rumor has it *Extreme* was canned when the developers saw what *Nights* could do and *Extreme* couldn't) and you have this. Fun, but hardly a convincing answer to *Super Mario 64*

Super Street Fighter Alpha 2

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Released: Out Now

It's out on PlayStation, too, but thanks to Saturn's superiority at 2D, *SSFA2* is way more fun on Saturn (that may have to do with the Saturn's more fighting game friendly pad design as well). It's a head to head comparison that Saturn wins easily

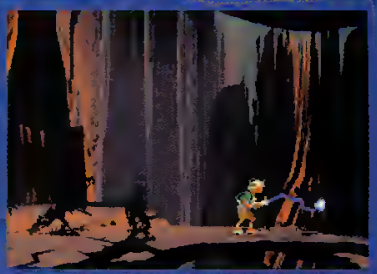
Panzer Dragoon Zwei

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sega
Released: Out Now

This beautiful rail shooter series demonstrates the power of the Saturn and showed, after the debacle of 32X, that Sega developers could still do a good non-arcade game if they put their minds to it. *Panzer Dragoon* is a highpoint in Saturn's library

Hearts of Darkness

Publisher: Sega
Dev: Amazing Studios
Released: 1997



Fantastic graphics and an intriguing plot, but endless delays make waiting for this Gallic-developed title (which is set to appear on Saturn first) something of an exercise in existential torture. Still it should be great if it ever actually ships

GAMES

Daytona USA Championship

Publisher: Sega
Dev: Sega AM2
Released: Dec '96

Don't call it *Daytona Remix*, but this new home version of Sega's recer edds cars, trecks, end en enhanced graphics engine for its second appearence. The exciting track editing mode, however, was removed to ensure en on-time ship date

Virtual On

Publisher: Sega
Dev: Sega AM3
Released: Out Now

It's fighting, it's robots, it isn't going to eppeel to everyone. Imagine *CyberSled* meets *BattleZone* with giant 'mechs end you heve *Virtuel On*. Without *Assault*-style controls, though, the home port mey pale next to the ercade originel

Virtua Fighter 3

Publisher: Sega
Dev: Sega AM2
Released: Dec'97

It ell comes down to this. If Sega can't find e wey to shoe-horn the game, somehow, onto Saturn, the system is finished. If they can do it (if there was ever a time for 64X, this is it), things mey look up for Sege in 1997 end beyond

CONCLUSION

Last chance for Sega? Or still early days for Saturn?

By simultaneously trying to maintain support for Genesis and 32X, Sega spread itself too thinly at the launch of Saturn. And although it has largely managed to solve most of these early problems, it has yet to offer an extremely compelling reason, beyond the arcade exclusives, to buy Saturn. Currently Sega's 32-bit system maintains a solid second place in the world's next-generation race, but in all probability this will soon become third as Nintendo 64 catches up and overtakes.

It's important to remember that Sega doesn't necessarily need the home hardware business for its long term survival. It has been an independent game developer before, and it can be so again. Indeed, many believe that Sega could make more money publishing its games on all platforms than it can by throwing good money after bad backing Saturn. Already, Sega is publishing PC games, and doors have been left open for PlayStation development in the future. The bottom line: Even if the Saturn ship isn't necessarily sinking just yet, Sega has all its lifeboats in place and ready to go.

It is doubtful that the Saturn is going to rocket past the PlayStation or N64 without some kind of divine intervention. Certainly, NetLink fails to excite — especially given Sega's history with peripherals — and despite *Nights* and *Fighting Vipers*, Saturn's upcoming software doesn't inspire much confidence either. It is **NG**'s belief that Sega internally acknowledges that Saturn is beaten in the U.S., and were it not for its continued success in Japan (and Sega's considerable pride) it would quit immediately.

Except, of course, that Sega may be able to eke out a profitable Saturn business in third place. By promoting its large library and introducing budget releases inbetween AM2 arcade conversions, Saturn could maintain a holding pattern for years to come. In conclusion, **NG** expects Saturn to remain a viable platform through 1997, but after that, it's anyone's guess. So unless you have to have Sega's arcade line-up, or are a sucker for *Nights* (and we wouldn't blame you if you are), Saturn has to be considered a secondary purchase this holiday season.

Sega Saturn

Demonstrable hardware power
★★★

Current software library
★★★

Future software prognosis
★★½

Marketing muscle
★★★

Overall future prognosis
★★½

Final score
★★★

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graphics

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multiple game system hook-ups

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stereo

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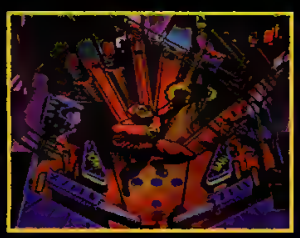

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Format:	**Nintendo 64**
Launched:	**June 23, 1996**
U.S. Release Date:	**September 29, 1996**
Origin:	**Japan**
U.S. sales:	**600,000**
Worldwide sales:	**2 million**
U.S. titles:	**4 approx**
Worldwide titles:	**6 approx**
U.S. retail Price:	**$199**

Over a year late. Only a handful of games. Old fashioned cartridges. "Limited" supplies. The disastrous Virtual Boy fresh in gamers' minds. Nintendo still licking its wounds from a bloody 16-bit battle with Sega. And yet Nintendo 64 is still many people's favorite to win the next generation race. Why?

THE STORY SO FAR

A year behind its rivals, N64 has now launched. So will whoever laughs last laugh longest? Or, as Sega proved with Genesis, will it be the early bird that catches the videogame worm?

Nintendo singlehandedly resurrected the home videogame industry with the 8-bit NES after the disastrous crash of 1983-84. It then went on to rule the roost until the early 1990s, when the late introduction of Super NES gave Sega a chance to sneak in through the back door with Genesis. Sure, Super NES rallied wonderfully — but the once invincible Nintendo had been badly shaken.

Now, Nintendo 64 may be the most powerful of the next-generation consoles, but it is very late entering the race, and Sony has clearly grabbed the role of market leader. Will history repeat itself, with Sony playing the upstart position that Sega played at the dawn of the 16-bit era? Or can Nintendo demonstrate that it still has the clout it had back in 1985 and rise once more to a dominating position? Nintendo's Howard Lincoln claims that it can, and that it comes down to just three words — "Super Mario 64."

Nintendo was founded in 1889 as a manufacturer of traditional Hanafuda playing cards. But when 21-year old Hiroshi Yamauchi inherited the presidency he soon decided that Nintendo's future was in entertainment.

To that end, he hired several young engineers who created the company's first successful entertainment product, a grabbing hand. An electronic "love tester" sparked Yamauchi's interest in electronic toys, which paid off when Mr. Yokoi designed a light-gun. Nintendo quickly used the guns as the basic technology for electronic shooting galleries. The galleries were a massive success until 1973, when the oil crisis caused a massive recession in Japan and the galleries began to fail, leaving the company overextended. Mr. Yamauchi needed to take a serious gamble.

The gamble was licensing Magnavox's home *Pong* console. It paid off, and Nintendo was in the videogame business. After introducing the hand-held "Game and Watch" series in Japan and a series of arcade games, including *Donkey Kong*, the company took the bold step of introducing a home console, the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), into a U.S. market crippled by the failure of Atari. Retailers were aghast, remembering the mountains of unsold Atari 2600 product. But Nintendo persisted, and its 8-bit NES was a massive success, thanks in no small part to Nintendo's rigid quality control processes.

Nintendo Corporate Limited chairman Hiroshi Yamauchi (above, right) masterminded much of Nintendo 64's U.S. launch strategy. Nintendo of America's president Howard Lincoln (above, left)

After world-dominating success with NES, Nintendo allowed Sega's Genesis to steal half the 16-bit market from its Super NES. Clearly something needed to be done. So, in August 1993 Nintendo announced a collaboration with Silicon Graphics to create a new system, codenamed "Project Reality." It would sell for "under $250" (half what Sony estimated PlayStation would cost) and be the most powerful home videogame system ever devised. The news was greeted with skepticism by many in the industry, and as the years progressed, Nintendo delivered nothing but delays, name changes, and strategic partnerships with a variety of both better and lesser known names, such as Williams and Paradigm Simulations. Controversial decisions, like sticking with carts, led to many questioning the system's potential.

Any questions of potential, however, evaporated when the unit was released in Japan on June 23rd of this year. Despite only having three titles available (one of which was a chess game) 300,000 units were sold immediately at launch. *Super Mario 64* was heralded by many to be the greatest videogame of all time. The U.S. release, between the 26th and 29th of September (everyone broke the embargo) was similar, with another 300,000 units selling in four days.

But why the panicky last minute price drop from $249 to $199? Why did sales in Japan slow so quickly after its initial launch? And — again — where are all the games that were promised? And how come all the third party games look so poor? The challenge for Nintendo is to answer these questions and maintain the momentum of launch through the holiday season and beyond.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Will Nintendo's $150 64DD disk drive add-on make Nintendo 64 the console it should have been from the outset?

Will a 64MB writable disk drive add-on enable new gaming paradigms, or just gather dust on store shelves?

To all its detractors who point to the lack of a CD-ROM drive, Nintendo simply responds with its 64DD (aka "Bulky Drive"). Due for launch in Japan this time next year, this expensive ($100 to $150) Nintendo 64 add-on will add to the base unit a 64MB disk drive, of which 20MB will be writable (it can save as well as load). Considering that most game saves require less than 1MB of memory, it is tempting to speculate as to what other applications Nintendo has up its sleeve with this new, writeable medium.

Online gaming is **NG**'s guess (see page 19), but game updates on disk (new levels and characters), downloading software from stores, and complex adventure games also sound cool to us.

No one's ever successfully managed to sell a peripheral that costs almost as much as the console itself. But then, if it costs just $100 (or even $150) with *Zelda* packed in, hell — why not? After all, a lot of us paid $270 just to play *Super Mario 64*...

MARKETING MUSCLE

Nintendo, never known for impressive ads, appears to have, with Nintendo 64, ditched the "Play it Loud" line. Thank God

Total marketing budget, Oct-Dec: $54 million

Nintendo has never been a marketing powerhouse. Its success in the 8-bit days was largely due to being the only player with games of any quality whatsoever (its heavy-handed distribution practices didn't hurt either). Practically the only innovative marketing move that Nintendo ever made was the creation of an in-house magazine, *Nintendo Power*, which shamelessly plugs the latest Nintendo games to over 500,000 monthly readers.

But not even *Nintendo Power* could stave off Sega's 16-bit marketing blast, which managed to paint the Super NES as a children's toy.

After a lengthy period of inaction, Nintendo played catch-up with its derivative "Play it Loud" campaign, a shoddy attempt to mimic the Sega-style shock campaigns. But it was tough to reconcile a television ad that has a giant fat man exploding with a game like *Yoshi's Island*, and Nintendo's sales triumphs in the late 16-bit era surely had less to do with stunning ads than Sega's dropping of the ball with Sega CD and 32X, and the graphical leap of *DKC*.

For N64, though, Nintendo seems to have given up its pure, two-steps-behind-Sega emulation (which is probably smart, or else we'd be seeing Nintendo Theater of the Eye ads around now, or Princess Toadstool with no hair and rings around her head). Instead, it has adopted a moderately catchy, punny slogan — "Change the System" — with which to fight.

TV ads also abandon schlocky shock-tactics for some light-hearted humor and lots of footage of *Mario*. This back-to-basics kind of campaign reflects what we feel is the real Nintendo, and is a breath of fresh air compared to Sega's creative (we're not going to say misleading) "three 32-bit processors!" campaign. But lets face it, Nintendo's best marketing tool has never been its ads, or its tie-ins, or even its massive mailing list (the company sent out over 500,000 promotional videos for Nintendo 64). It's *Mario* games that Nintendo has always used to sell hardware systems, and Nintendo 64 is no exception.

Nintendo's current instore promotional items are downright refreshing, compared to mediocre past efforts

TECHNOLOGY

Nintendo's 64-bit project becomes reality

When Nintendo went to Silicon Graphics, the company with arguably the most powerful graphics hardware on the planet, to create the bulk of Nintendo 64's technology. Basically, N64 has all the operative features of a Silicon Graphics Reality Engine, with the caveat that it only works on a TV — hence a maximum resolution of 640 x 480.

The final Nintendo 64 hardware is flat-out stunning. Not only is it fast, but it has far more graphic manipulation and processing features built into it than PlayStation and Saturn put together. A quick comparison of *Wave Race* to, say, *Jet Mata* for PlayStation makes this readily apparent.

All has not been smooth sailing, however, as the massive delays of seemingly all N64 games demonstrates. Unlike the PlayStation and post-*VF Remix* Saturn, the Nintendo 64 toolkits were practically non-existent until Paradigm and Nintendo began to make them available within the last few months. If the Saturn is difficult to program, then up until very recently Nintendo 64 was impossible. A precious few developers stuck it out and built their own tools, notably Iguana (developers of *Turok: Dinasaur Hunter* for Acclaim). However, *Turok* is the exception that proves the rule — precious few other third-party products currently show any promise at all. Despite what Shigeru Miyamoto may have achieved with *Super Maria 64*, few developers outside of Nintendo (and Paradigm, presumably) will be likely to get the kind of results seen in *Maria* or *Wave Race* in the near term.

Another hitch dogging third-party game development is that while the system offers unprecedented power (with the exception of high-end arcade boards), most developers have become used to the luxury of data storage on CDs. Certainly, whether or not third parties can create games that take full advantage of N64's power using only 8MB or so of memory is an open question. Also unanswered is whether or not Nintendo will ease the financial burden of having to produce games on cartridges that cost over $30 to manufacture (CDs cost less than $3).

Still, this is not strictly Nintendo's problem. Developers asked for power, and Nintendo has delivered, in spades. The system beats the pie-in-the-sky specs announced two years ago — and not even a PC could do *Wave Race* justice, even at ten times the price.

Cartridges aside, it's hard at this stage to fault Nintendo 64's technology. But can anyone outside Nintendo use it?

The power of an SGI graphic workstation in a "below $250" console? That's what Nintendo promised and, largely, delivered

TECH SPECS

A look inside a little SGI

PERIPHERALS
Digital/Analog Control Pad (in seven colors)
64DD Magnetic Media Drive
RFU Adapter
Video Adapter
ory Cart

CPU
t MIPS R4300 RISC CPU @
t registers, data path and buffer
MIPS for CPU
Bit RISC "Reality Immersion"
dering Processor
xtures, Anti-aliasing Rasterizing Z bu
Audio and Video Processor
00+ MFLOPS for Graphics Co-Processor

GRAPHICS CAPABILITY
6 x 224 to 640 x 480, 21-Bit color output
-Bit RGBA pixel color frame buffer

MEMORY CONFIGURATION
MB RAM, Internal data bus is 128-bits wide
bus ' ORAM subsystem enabling transfers
"Rambus bus @ 500 MHz maximum

SOUND PROCESSOR
to 16-bit stereo @ 44.1Khz (CD quality)
M Compression algorithm
100 PCM channels

GEOMETRY ENGINE
e of calculating approximately 160 000 rectangl
e features enabled Hardware support for
re mapping
texturing
linear mip map interpolation
rspective correction
th buffering
ding
ring
on
ng
ouraud Shading
lpha-channeling (256 levels max)
"Level of Detail" (LOD) Management

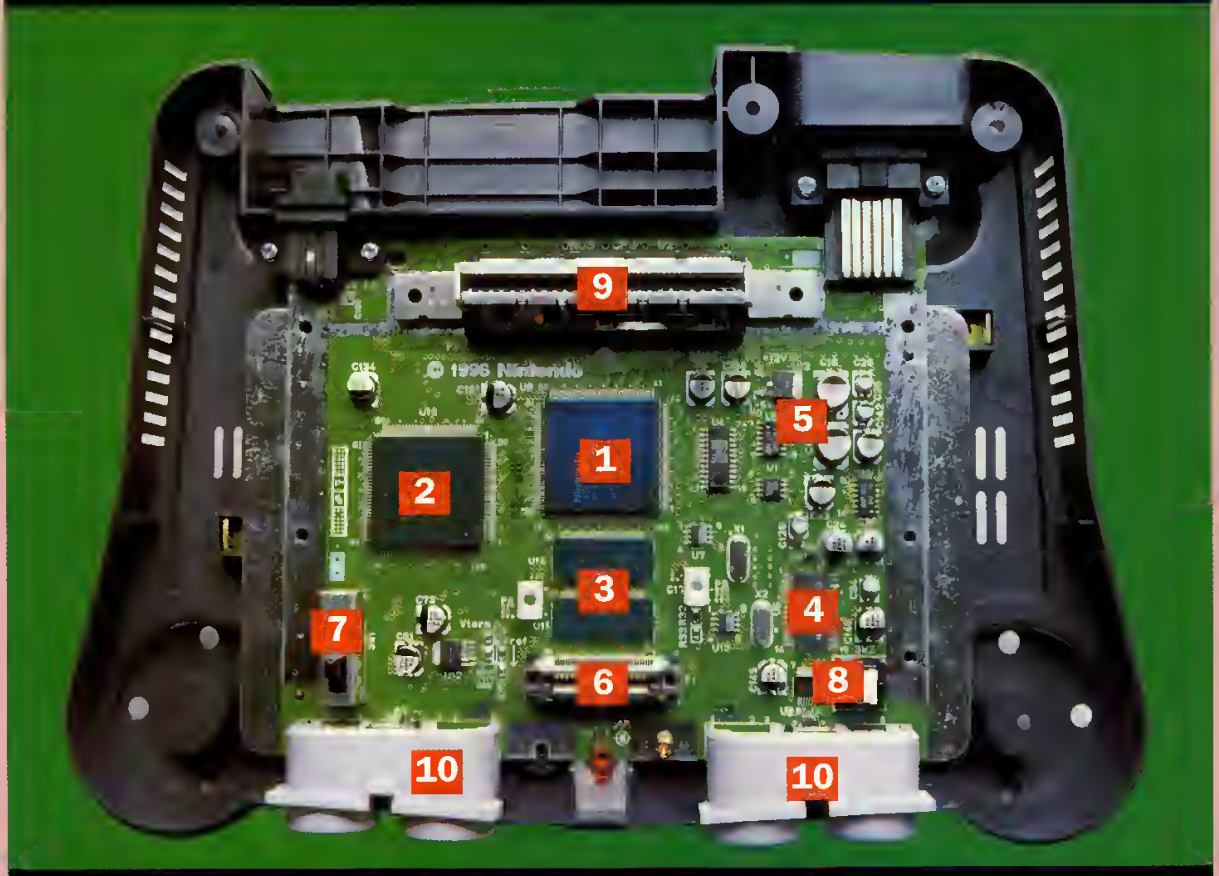
SPRITE SPECIAL EFFECTS
Scaling
Rotation
nti-aliasing
Alpha Channeling (up to 256 levels)

DISK SPECIFICATIONS
Magnetic Media with read and write capability
3 3/4" feed similar to a Zip drive
Bundled with 2MB expansion RAM pack that fits
Drive manufactured by ALPS

Transfer Rate and Seek Times
MB/sec data transfer, 150 ms seek time

Media:
64MB disk storage, 44MB read-only, 20MB writable
Compression of N64 enables supposed real-time de
4DD

UNDER THE HOOD



In stark contrast to the Saturn, Nintendo 64's chip board is a hallmark of elegance. Even compared to PlayStation, the Nintendo 64 looks simple. In fact, it has so few chips, a handheld version would be extremely easy to manufacture.

1 Reality Coprocessor. This SGI designed chip controls graphics, sound, etc. Running at 62.5 MHz (100+ MFLOPS), it has onboard rendering processors to handle textures, anti-aliasing, z-buffering and graphic effects. If you look at the chip with en electron microscope, you can see the names of the design team members

2 64-bit MIPS R4300 RISC CPU: Runs at 93.75 MHz (125 MIPS) with a true 64-bit data path and registers. This is the heart of Nintendo 64, and controls the object and game logic

3 RAM Chips: 2MB RAM. Rambus DRAM subsystem allows theoretical transfers up to 563 MB/second

4 Peripheral Interface chip: filters and integrates messages from the peripherals into the heart of the board

5 Processing Resistors: These resistors are used for video, audio, and graphics processing. They assist in balancing and mixing video signals (particularly for the digital to analog signals)

6 RAM bus port: slot reserved for future RAM expansion packs. Currently occupied by a null-terminator

7 Power Switch

8 Reset Switch

9 Cartridge Slot (contains a pass through to the bottom of the board for future expansion options, such as 64DD)

10 Ports for up to four game controllers

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GAMES

Gamers cannot live on *Mario* alone

Software is the big question mark for Nintendo 64. Yes, *Super Mario 64* is the greatest game of all time, but — as has been pointed out many times before — it was created by over 40 engineers who had two years of development time and complete access to the hardware developers (allegedly system specs were changed to meet their specific needs). It is not likely that anyone else will be able to equal Nintendo efforts like *Mario* or *Wave Race* for quite some time.

And beyond such first party product, the forthcoming 1997 lineup is looking worryingly weak. Nintendo maintains that quality not quantity is key, and that by limiting releases it can guarantee quality. Fine, but only if the resulting software actually measure up, and only once essential genres (fighting game, racing game, RPG, sports, etc) are catered for. Unfortunately, from what we've seen it is unlikely that many N64 titles will push new boundaries any time soon. And, there's still no sign of an emerging sports category, leaving sports fans to run to the open arms of Sega and Sony.

To be sure, titles like *Shadows of the Empire*, and *Killer Instinct* look acceptable, but they don't equal *Mario* in terms of leaping beyond the status quo. It's understandable — many third parties didn't get development systems until very recently — but what do gamers care? We want games.

Also, with only a few titles released each year, Nintendo 64 will never have the breadth of software that PlayStation has, regardless of any superior depth. Unless most of the system's titles are hits, gamers looking for the system with the best library will shy away from Nintendo 64. And despite Nintendo's exclusive-only strategy, many of the first titles will be ports, like *Doom 64* and *Mortal Kombat*.

Additionally, with Nintendo sticking to the model that's worked so well for it in the past (complete control over the production and approval process — third parties beware) it's yet to be demonstrated in 1996 that anyone other than Nintendo can turn a profit releasing cartridges, given the cost-of-goods risk and massive upfront investment required. If Williams and Acclaim don't make some serious cash this holiday season, don't expect many additional third parties to take the plunge.

Nintendo has professed (and we believe it) that it doesn't really care if no third parties develop for the system — all the more market for itself. Fine. But it is worth noting that no system has ever succeeded with only first-party software. (*Odyssey2* or *Lynx* anyone?). Bottom Line: Despite the obvious strength of *Mario 64*, software (a lack of it, to be precise) could be *Nintendo 64*'s Achilles' heel.

Shigeru Miyamoto (left), is largely responsible for Nintendo's success. He has been intimately involved in the development of nearly every Nintendo title of note. Genyo Takeda (above), was responsible for the design of N64's innovative analog joypad

Super Mario 64

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo
Released: Out Now

What can we say that hasn't been said already? *Mario 64* is absolutely stunning and everything we've come to expect when Shigeru Miyamoto is given 40 engineers and two years to complete a game. A fantastic achievement, and N64's main attraction

Pilot Wings 64

Publisher: Nintendo
Dev: Paradigm
Released: Out Now

The slow pace and esoteric goals of *Pilot Wings 64* make its appeal narrower than that of *Mario* or *Wave Race*, but it provides an excellent technology demo of just how well N64 can push polygons. And who doesn't want to be a birdman?

Wave Race 64

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo
Released: Out Now

If anything threatens *Mario*'s crown, it's this. The physics of racing on waves, the stunning textures, and the dead-on level design make this one of the most unique racers of all time. And it beats today's crop of arcade jet ski games with ease

GAMES

Mortal Kombat Trilogy

Publisher: Williams
Developer: Williams
Released: Nov '96

OK, it's not our favorite title, but for *MK* fans, this three-in-one trilogy (despite the lose of some animation frames) should deliver the ultimate *MK* experience, with tons of characters, fatalities, backgrounds and, of course, buckets of blood

Wayne Gretsky 3D Hockey

Publisher: Williams
Dev: Atari Games
Released: Dec '96

Nintendo has never been a sports powerhouse, but this arcade style hockey game (created by the designer of *Asteroids*) is extremely fun to play. Plus, it's got the NHL license and fighting (too bad they had to take out the finishing moves)

Wonder Project J2

Publisher: Enix
Developer: Enix
Released: TBA

Imagine an artificial intelligence game in which players interact with a little 2D Japanese school-girl. That's this. Weird, yes. Likely to hugely popular in Japan, definitely. Likely to be released in the U.S., erm... But it does show the depth of N64

Killer Instinct Gold

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Rare
Released: Dec '96

Perhaps the best thing about *KI* is how it makes us appreciate *Mortal Kombat* — but it still sucks. Fans of outrageous combos, gravity defying babes, and warping 2D levels (that lot kids on Usenet claim that it's 3D), however, will no doubt love this

Zelda 64

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo
Released: TBA

The expected 64DD pack-in, *Zelda* is a big enough name that Nintendo may actually sell a respectable number of the $150 add-ons. Not much is known about the game, but expect Link to follow Mario into 3D, and maximize 64DD's writeable technology

FIFA 1997

Publisher: EA
Developer: EA
Released: 1997

Scheduled to debut in Japan (tied to a J-League license) before its U.S. release, expect *FIFA* to do for Nintendo 64 the same thing that it did for 3DO — showcase the system's 3D capabilities. Hopefully it will play a good game of soccer, too

Shadows of the Empire

Publisher: Nintendo
Dev: LucasArts
Released: Dec '96

The Star Wars license guarantees a hit for a game which tries to combine vehicle piloting, *Doom*-style shootiag, and *Rebel Assault*-style flying. It looks good and plays OK — but console owners still don't have the Star Wars game we deserve

Top Gear Rally

Publisher: Kemco
Dev: Boss Games
Released: 1997

Kemco's reward for releasing Virtual Boy titles was a Nintendo 64 license. It looks like its using it well, recruiting Boss Games to create an attempted *Sega Rally* killer that looks set to be the first realistic racing game on the system

Super Mario Kart 64

Publisher: Nintendo
Dev: Nintendo
Released: 1997

it was one of the best games on Super NES and it's coming to N64. *SMK64* will be another title to make good use of the four player options inherent in N64, and — like *Wave Race 64* — stress Nintendo's dominance of the home arcade genre

GAMES

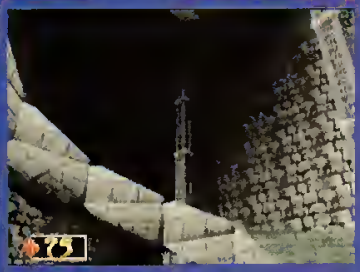
Dual Heroes

Publisher: Hudson
Developer: Hudson
Released: 1997

First Square, and now Hudson? What is it with Japanese developers and 3D fighting games? Still, the people who brought us *Bomberman* look set to provide Nintendo 64's answer to *Tobal No.1*, *Virtua Fighter 2*, et al

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter

Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Iguana
Released: Jan '97



Turok, a *Doom*-style shooter based on a comic-book license features a machine-gun toting Native American, dinosaurs with laser weapons, and some great level design. Although delayed until January, *Turok* will help N64 considerably

Doom 64

Pub: Williams
Dev: Williams/Id
Released: 1997

Doom 64 will (hopefully) be the last and best version of the game that took the PC world by storm. N64's anti-aliasing will take care of those ugly bit-map problems, and four player deathmatches will rock — we can't wait

CONCLUSION

It's a question of faith — are the games coming or not?

Nintendo has managed to silence its critics with Nintendo 64's hardware, but this will be for nothing if there aren't enough games that exploit it. No one actually wants an electric drill, they want holes in the wall — and no one wants a game system, they want to play games. Nintendo 64 sales slowed to nothing in Japan after launch precisely because of its lack of software, and unsurprisingly the release of *Wave Race* sparked a massive spike in sales.

The following issues still aren't clear: One, will third party game publishers be able to make money making games on cartridges that cost $30 to manufacture? Two, will any of the games released in the foreseeable future be up to the standard of *Maria* and *Wave Race*? Three, can Nintendo 64 survive without significant third party development? And four, will gamers en masse accept a system with such a slim library of albeit high-quality titles?

These questions should be answered in the marketplace this holiday season and throughout 1997. But Nintendo's also planning another gamble — with 64DD, can it be the first console manufacturer to introduce an expensive accessory? The gaming possibilities of an internet-linked network of N64's equipped with writable storage devices is awe inspiring, and could bring to Nintendo success undreamed of during the 16-bit era. If 64DD fails, however, it will only serve to dilute the marketplace and diversify Nintendo's development resources. This ain't good. Just ask anyone at Sega.

Nintendo's commitment to the home game industry is unquestionable — it's its only business. Unlike Sega or Sony, Mr Yamauchi and Company have no option but to stick this out for the long haul. Consequently, Nintendo is here to stay, and that means that Nintendo 64 *has* to succeed.

In conclusion, if you can put up with only a handful of games and the unlikelihood of any budget titles being released any time soon, then Nintendo 64 should be your number one choice this holiday season.

Nintendo 64

Demonstrable hardware power
★★★★½

Current software library
★★

Future software prognosis
★★★★

Marketing muscle
★★★

Overall future prognosis
★★★★

Final score
★★★★

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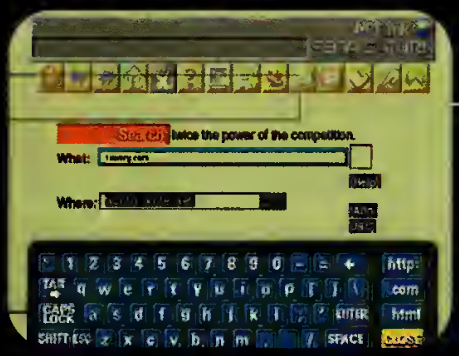

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The Future Sound of

Game Music

When it comes to interactive entertainment, the music industry is an antiquated beast. However, attitudes are changing. And fast. **Next Generation** looks at how digital technology is uniting the interests of both musicians and game designers

Videogames and contemporary music have now officially met, shaken hands, and declared their respect for each other. This is good news for gamers as, post-*Wipeout*, developers have finally realized that the right music can be used to enrich the gaming experience.

Three games currently providing evidence for this standpoint are: one, *Wipeout 2097*, with user-selectable in-game music from the likes of Underworld, the Chemical Brothers, The Prodigy, Fluke, and FSOL; two, Photek Virgin's *Broken Sword*, which features a specially written soundtrack by Barrington Pheloung, the top Autralian classical composer; and three, Warp's *E0*, which will come with a shiny new score by Michael Nyman. Developers, then, are taking music seriously, and the music industry is starting to take games at least as seriously as films.

It's good news for music companies. Evidence for this is provided by Astralworks which expects to shift large quantities of the forthcoming *Wipeout 2097* compilation (which knocks Sony's efforts with the original *Wipeout* into a cocked hat) later on this year, thanks to a built-in audience of serious gamers. And Suburban Base, the tiny London-based jungle label is preparing to release the fruits of a tie-up

The first *Wipeout* album was adversely affected by time pressures. *Wipeout 2097* is an altogether more credible affair — it will even spawn an associated single release

with Sega that could propel it from underground to overground. And it's good news for the games companies, which stand to achieve much-needed fashion credibility among a post-teenage audience through tie-ups with underground music culture, as well as using music to tack extra selling points onto their games. Good news all round, then? Time for a closer look.

***Wipeout 2097* is** an excellent update to a great original. Attention to detail has been the focus, rather than thinking up a big new idea for the game. Yet it does have one aspect that sets it apart from all other games on the market — it has a built-in library of adrenaline-fuelled dance tracks, any of which can be selected to produce the most appropriate head-rush for a serious gaming session.

It's not as if these tracks are off-cuts that have been gathering dust in record company archives, either. There are two exclusive tracks from Fluke, one from Underworld (who seem to have become a chart act thanks to the film, *Trainspotting*), an exclusive track from ultra-hip intelligent drum and bass/techno man Photek and two tracks from Future Sound of London which will be unavailable until their eagerly awaited album appears. Also, the Chemical Brothers' *Loops of Fury*, nowadays only available on a pricey import and a previously unavailable mix of their track, *Leave Home*, courtesy of Darren Emerson and his cohorts and an instrumental mix of The Prodigy's familiar smash-hit, *Firestorter* appear on the game. So depending on your mood, you can opt to play *Wipeout 2097* with musical backing ranging from the Chemical Brothers' meaty beats and general bang, crash, and wallop to Photek's slowish, metallic drum and bass, via Fluke's more laid-back catchiness. Psygnosis's Tim Wright (aka Cold Storage) has written two tracks for the game, and all the tracks can be set to play in random order. Few games can be tailored to suit your mood — it's usually the other way round.

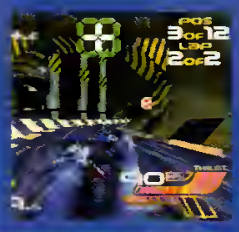
As is now customary, *Wipeout 2097* will be accompanied by a compilation album (on the Astralworks label, in the U.S.) due to hit the record stores a couple of weeks before the game. Psygnosis has high hopes for this — according to the company's Glen O'Connell, "Last time, the album was a bit disappointing. This time, we think it stands up in its own right."

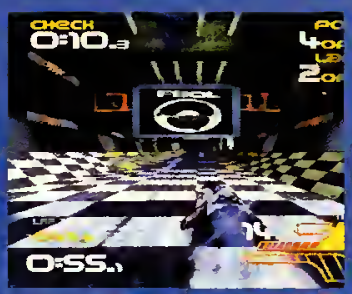
As far as O'Connell is concerned, much of the credit for this must go to Virgin, Psygnosis's new musical partner. The original *Wipeout* album was put together by Sony Music and although Psygnosis's stint as a tiny wing of the mighty Sony corporation has brought it untold riches, its collaboration with Sony Music was probably not one of them. O'Connell says, "I don't think Sony knew what they had — they just took old tracks from their archives. It was an experience we've certainly learned from." To be fair to Sony Music, the first *Wipeout* compilation was adversely affected by time pressures. But the *Wipeout 2097* compilation album is an altogether more credible affair. As proof of this, it will even spawn an associated single release: Fluke's rather excellent *Atom Bomb*.

Psygnosis U.K. will also back up *Wipeout 2097*'s launch with a club tour around some of the U.K.'s most happening venues. This will be a joint effort with Virgin Music and Red Bull, the energy drink manufacturer, in true 1990 co-promotion, brand association-style. Die-hard U.K. dubbers are well used to this sort of thing by now, and, as long as they get a good evening's entertainment, they can handle being marketing guinea-pigs (look out for Red Bull product placement in the game,

"*WIPEOUT 2097* SHOULD BE GOOD. I CAN NEVER QUALIFY IN *WIPEOUT*. I STILL PLAY IT A LOT, THINKING "I'LL DO IT THIS TIME." BUT I NEVER QUITE MAKE IT."

DARREN EMERSON, UNDERWORLD





Underworld (left) and Future Sound of London (right) both contribute well to the soundtrack for Psygnosis's *Wipeout 2097*

Zion Train: pooling sounds

Zion Train may be laid-back anti-establishment dubsters, but their passion for technology singles them out

Dub collective Zion Train are not, on the face of it, the sort of music group you'd expect to be technology wizards. They are notable for adopting a political stance, disseminating agitation propoganda concerning the destruction of the planet, the marketing-led excesses of the 1990s, and any curbing of the right to free speech. They are sworn enemies of the major labels of the record industry. Yet when it comes to technology, they're bang up-to-date. Last year's *Homegrown Fantasy* puts all the music CD-ROMs created with vast heaps of major label cash to shame. Zion Train's WWW site, the Wobbly Web, has become the main forum for dissemination of their ideas. And with the Soundpool, their latest technological project, they believe they have hit on an idea which could seriously harm the bloated infrastructure of the record industry and usher in a new era of creative collaboration between musical artists.

The concept behind the Soundpool is simple. Zion Train and anyone else signing up are free to use any of the "ideas, samples, conversations, and collaborations" contained in the Soundpool, without recourse to lawyers, publishers, or other "musical businessmen." It's a means of collaborating with all ZT's musical peers which, because it makes heavy use of the Internet, doesn't require physical proximity.

Zion Train's *Homegrown Fantasy* CD-ROM is certainly worth checking out, as is its WWW page. But do they get games?

The issue of copyright when one artist samples another's work is perhaps most inflammatory in the music industry. Colin from Zion Train (who likes to be known as Agent Cod), is full of examples of copyright madness: "There's a guy called John Oswald who invented what he called Plunderphonics. He released an LP called *Dab* with a pic of Michael Jackson on the cover. Each track was a restructuring of other people's material (*Dab* is, of course, Bad backwards). He pressed 1,000 up with his own money, but still was forced to take them all back after legal action. WEA then hired him to do a celebration of their 40th anniversary in the music business and the Grateful Dead hired him to work with what might be their most famous song, Dark Star. They gave him 57 different live recordings of it, performed between 1967 and 1994, and he created a 2-hour piece using all of them — sometimes in 30-second bits, sometimes in 1-second bursts. It ended up as a continuous flow, travelling forward and backward in time. It's an amazing piece." His argument is that the powers that be like the freedom technology offers, but only when it's working for them.

Zion Train hopes to circumvent the perenial problems with using samples with Soundpool. "The existing Soundpool was our Soundpool, for the *Grow Together* album," explains Agent Cod, "but for our next LP we'll create another Soundpool. We'd like to see other people starting their own Soundpool. What we are saying to artists is when, say, you're pissing about on the guitar and you get something nice, send it to us and we'll play it inside-out and upside-down. Only people with few ideas desperately hang onto what they've got."

"The archaic legal structure of copyright and publishing stands in the way of art and music. But now there can be a complete worldwide digital community." Fair enough, but how do Zion Train propose to overthrow the majors with their technological savvy? They think that things like Soundpool will bring an artistic freedom that would discourage artists from signing to majors: "Publishers 50 years ago owned 95% of what they published, now they own about 15%. People like Warner have been picking up thousands of little people in an attempt to make up the profit they had before. Nowadays, if you sign up to a large label you're tied into doing albums, videos, Web sites, and promotions."

But, say Zion Train, you can do it yourself without signing to a major, with a bit of DIY electronica. "We produced the CD-ROM for £25,000, which let us put it in the shops at £10. We're setting up to do commerce on the Net, and we'll be in the same position as, say, Sony. Except that if Sony set up shop on the Net with a 100,000 back catalogue and we did the same with 20, we'd get more sales, because Sony's site would be so daunting. When set-top boxes appear, Internet radio stations will be viable and there'll be unlimited pirate radio. As a by-product of the promo budget for our LP, we've performed the groundwork to set up a permanent TV station on the Net."

I'VE BEEN SO BUSY RECENTLY THAT I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO CHECK NEW GAMES OUT. WHAT'S THAT *TRACK AND FIELD* FOR THE PLAYSTATION LIKE?

DARREN EMERSON, UNDERWORLD

ng special

Revellers at London's Notting Hill Carnival were surprised to see a Sega float pumping out hardstep jungle dance music

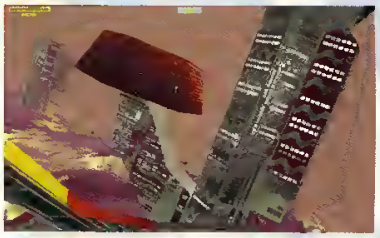
too). It sounds as though the club tour should provide good entertainment. According to O'Connell, "It will take place in underground clubs in eight U.K. cities. We'll probably take one room and do a whole *Wipeout 2097* experience, getting some of the bands on the album to DJ and even play live."

Following Sony's

appropriation of club culture for the PlayStation, Sega has inked a tie-up with Suburban Base, an underground dance music label. An intriguing union, as Suburban Base is about as underground as you can get — it has been purveying energetic jungle to the cognoscenti for years without attracting much overt attention — and Sega is a massive global brand. Sega is, therefore, pursuing credibility with a young audience through association with an underground record company, just as Sony's PlayStation marketing has started to concentrate on cracking the mainstream. This doesn't necessarily mean Sega is still a jump behind Sony, however.

The first fruits of the Sega/Suburban Base tie-up are so low-key they're almost imperceptible: a white label 12-inch, circulated to DJs, branded with graphics from its *Baku Baku* Saturn game. The approach taken for this is similar to that taken by JVC with *Tekken*: Suburban Base has overseen an exercise involving getting artists to take noises from the soundtrack to *Baku Baku Animal* and remodel them into dance tracks. The EP has a selection of techno and drum and bass mixes performed by Suburban Base artists The Dream Team and Timebase.

Revellers at London's Notting Hill Carnival (including **Next Generation**) were surprised to find a Sega float, pumping out hardstep jungle — again, this was the work of Suburban Base. But the highest-profile result of this unlikely union will be a compilation album called *Club Saturn*, due for release later this year. This promises to resemble the *Wipeout 2097* compilation in reverse. Sega's in-house musician, Richard Jacques, explains: "*Club Saturn* will feature all the top Saturn games between now and Christmas. Like the *Baku Baku* EP, we'll take sound effects from the games and get people to rewrite them into tracks." Suburban Base's Danny Donnelly elaborates: "The *Club Saturn* tracks will span a number of different styles. There'll be jungle tracks from DJ Hype, Pascal, The Dream Team, Remarc, and Swift, house tracks from Dudarella, who have just signed to MCA, Marshall Jefferson and Acorn Arts, and trip-hop tracks from D'Cruze and the Balouga Boys, who are signed to Stress." Whether this eclectic mix will hang together as a whole is anyone's guess, but its very strangeness, plus the presence of the notoriously elusive and perverse house legend Marshall Jefferson, should guarantee attention, if only to enable an assessment of whether he has lost his touch or not.



Sega's Suburban Base float for London's Notting Hill Carnival (left). Gremlin's *Hardwar* (above) features Warp's music

Suburban Base's Donnelly says: "There'll probably be a playable demo of some Saturn games in with the album — we want to link the music and the game aspects. Games are a big thing with the jungle scene and the whole dance scene — people are always coming back from raves and putting games on. And it's a good promotion for us to be linked with a household name like Sega."

Gremlin has

always had more interest in music than most games companies, as illustrated by the PWEI

"I'VE GOT A PLAYSTATION AND A PC FOR GAMES — I'VE BEEN A GAME FREAK SINCE I WAS YOUNG. WITH THE ZX SPECTRUM AND STUFF. I USED TO GO TO GAME SHOWS WHEN I WAS YOUNGER AND HAD AN AMIGA. WE USED TO LIKE STUFF BY THAT COMPANY CINEMAWARE. WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM? I GO UP ON THE UNDERWORLD NEWSGROUP QUITE A LOT - WE'RE THINKING OF STARTING A NEW UNDERWORLD MAILER. I'VE GOT A POWER MAC IN THE STUDIO, BUT I'M ABOUT TO GET A NEW 8500 BECAUSE I NEED THE PCI SLOTS."

DARREN EMERSON, UNDERWORLD

Interactive music: Header

Header's CD-ROM shows others looking to make audio and computer CDs how to do it right

With sales felling, music CD-ROMs have had a tough time lately, but one of the best examples is *Header 1* — a fun and brave way to explore electronic music to be accessible, interactive form on CD-ROM

CD-ROM remains virtually unexplored as an artistic medium. Why this should be is one of the great modern mysteries — undoubtedly, commercial pressures don't help, but it's now cheaper than ever to author CD-ROMs. Fair enough, conventional art (unless it is digitally created, as with the works of William Latham) tends to lose its authenticity in the digitization process. But modern music is to a large extent completely digital. So why are music CD-ROMs typically so poor?

One problem is that musical artists interested in creating CD-ROMs have generally been signed to major labels, which, in the absence of interesting ideas for musical use of the medium, have indiscriminately thrown vast amounts of money at the problem. Header's approach is the complete diametric opposite of this.

Header is a bunch of guys based in London's ultra-hip Soho whose previous lives involved the music business and multimedia companies such as Dorling Kindersley. Fed up with producing anodyne, conventional CD-ROMs for DK, they set off on a journey of discovery aimed at finding out just how the CD-ROM medium could expand the boundaries of music. The result is *Header 1*, which the team hopes will be just the first of a long line.

The idea behind Header was to persuade artists to record tracks specifically for digital manipulation on a CD-ROM, and then add to each track a different interface, enabling the user (with Header, one ceases to be a mere listener) to alter those tracks in real-time. Effectively, every time you sit in front of *Header* running on your PC or Mac, you are performing a unique remix of that track.

Header 1 also plays in audio CD players, as a six-track mini-compilation, sporting tracks from MoWax group UNKLE, drum and bass pioneers 4-Hero, techno supremo Carl Craig, the late, lamented dub guru King Tubby, deep house king Derrick Carter (hiding behind the alias Red Nail Kidz), and cerebral technoey dance group As One. As a compilation, it's rather unsatisfying — some of the tracks are very short, although quality is abundant. The Red Nail Kidz track is dauntingly long, but nevertheless touched by Carter's genius. And the Carl Craig track is to say the least, challenging: Header is fond of relating how one of the U.K.'s high-profile national radio DJs called them up to tell them the CD-ROM wasn't working, with Craig's track playing perfectly in the background.

But put *Header 1* in your CD-ROM drive and it quickly becomes apparent that you're witnessing some sort of birth. The intro screen consists of a whirling array of blue spheres with labels attached. Click on the one marked Carl Craig and you find yourself at a strange screen with a revolving portrait of Craig in one corner and five large dots floating around the middle. The track is split into four loops, all carefully synchronized. By wiggling them around with the mouse you can, for example, drop the bass out or chop the whole thing down to just the effects. Discovering what you can do to the music using this interface is hypnotic, and even this atonal track can be coerced into making some form of sense. The elements of music are laid out for you, and it's up to you to shape it your satisfaction. The tools and raw materials for making your own music have at last left esoteric studios and arrived on your desktop. 4-Hero's track is particularly impressive in this regard: it's a drum and bass blueprint that can be assembled into different configurations and flavors.

Considering Header's meagre resources, *Header 1* is amazingly polished (although they did have trouble making it compatible with both PCs and Macs). The idea could quite obviously be taken much further, with the introduction of things like floating vocal effects and ambience loops which could be pulled into any of the tracks. No doubt such ideas will find their way into future Headers. And goodness knows what kinds of music will transpire when some of the more cerebral electronic musical artists get their heads around the idea of writing specifically for CD-ROM. But at last, someone has found a way of marrying CD-ROM and music in a way which enriches them both. And that can only benefit gamers everywhere.

ONE OF THE SCARIEST THINGS ABOUT GAMES IS WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF OR DREAMING ABOUT THEM

JOHN FULLER, FULCO

soundtrack to its oddly addictive *Loaded*. And now, it has followed in the path of Psygnosis and announced a tie-up with underground techno label Warp and the Designers Republic for *Hardwar*, a futuristic arcade flight sim, shooter, and strategy game due for release later this year.

This owes more to geography than anything else, as Gremlin's Mark Mattocks explains: "The angle is that this is a collaboration between Sheffield, U.K. companies that are at the top of their industries. We've wanted to work with Warp for a long time, so we looked at two or three projects and picked *Hardwar*. We're trying to keep the music integrated with the game. We went to Designers Republic not because it's 'the thing to do' but because we've wanted to work with them for years."

Mattocks also mentions Warp artists such as Autechre, LFO, and Black Dog in connection with the game. As these are all no-compromise techno merchants, it could produce a very odd gaming experience indeed. All will come clear at holiday season, when *Hardwar* ships on PC.

Gremlin's interest in acquiring music for use in games has not all been smooth sailing, however. Although there's no suggestion that its dealings with the small indie Warp are anything but harmonious, it has fallen foul of the arcane practices and attitudes of the mainstream record industry. Mattocks offers these dark words:

Tetsuya Mizuguchi's love of clubbing is soon to permeate into Sega's new *Touring Car* coin-op

"There are a few attitudes in the music industry that need to change. It mustn't see what we're doing as a revenue stream, but as a new outlet. Otherwise, this industry will turn round and say that we don't need published music."

SCI had a similarly aggravating experience recently, when it tried to license some tracks from Goa Trancers' *Hallucinogen* for its forthcoming redesign of *SWIV* for the PC. The company's Sam Forest explains: "We weren't able to get a license for the tracks in time for the game's release. There was a hassle with getting the royalties cleared. It's a bloody nightmare, really." This reflects well, strangely enough, on Virgin's efforts with the *Wipeout 2097* album. Record companies like Virgin could profit immensely from adopting a sensibly open-minded attitude towards computer games. Indeed, they will have to if they are to avoid long-term damage from Internet-based sample banks, such as Zion Train's Sound Pool, if they take off.

Samplers, drum machines, sequencers, and synths have irrevocably changed the nature of music. Not just as a result of the peculiar sounds they can be used to make, but because they enable people to make rich music very cheaply.

People have been known, in the 1990s, to create tracks in their bedrooms and watch them rise up the charts. And, as technology forges ahead, it becomes both cheaper and more doable. Only recently, however — particular since the likes of Carl Craig and Derrick May picked up Kraftwerk's gauntlet and invented techno in the dismal surroundings of Detroit, and various pioneering American artists turned disco into house — have artists started to get to grips with the artistic possibilities offered by sophisticated, electronic music technology.

These are still relatively early days in the world of electronic music, and pioneers using digital studios and new media are constantly discovering vast acres of new ground which is just begging to be broken. Whether, like Zion Train (see page 87), you choose to use electronica to break free from the shackles of the record industry or, like Header, you accidentally stumble across a new way of marrying cutting-edge music to interactivity, you will find that electronic machinery can open doors into unexplored areas of the music world.

And considering the similarity between certain game genres and films, it is surprising that classical composers, who nowadays are almost universally well practiced in the art of scoring music for films, have rarely turned their hands to creating game music (apart from in Japan, of course, where RPG companies such as Enix and Square have employed world class composers and orchestras for producing the score for CD albums of game music). But is starting to happen, and surely shows proves beyond doubt that, at last, game developers are taking game music seriously.

> "CERTAIN GAMES COMPLEMENT MUSIC WELL, PARTICULARLY THE ONES WITH A LOT OF MOTION. SINCE WE STARTED MAKING MUSIC, WE'VE FOUND THAT THE BEST WAY TO TEST IT IS TO HAMMER REALLY FAST DOWN THE MOTORWAY WITH IT ON FULL WHACK. IF THE ADRENALINE IS THERE, THE CONCENTRATION IS THERE. IF THE MUSIC DOESN'T WORK, YOUR CONCENTRATION FALTERS."
>
> JOHN [illegible] LUKE

In turn, some of the finest classical composers in the world are taking game music seriously. The Australian Barrington Pheloung has a back catalogue of 48 ballets and a reputation as one of the world's most talented conductors. He is a darling of the classical scene. But he is best known for his knack of bringing music to the masses, such as for the U.K.'s "Inspector Morse" TV series and the film *Truly, Madly, Deeply*.

Now Pheloung has completed the music for *Broken Sword*, Virgin's animated point-and-click game adventure. Pheloung is quite a character, too. Now 37, he started off as a blues guitarist before forcing his way into London's prestigious Royal College of Music at the age of 18. This means he's not afraid to experiment. *The Broken Sword* music, he claims, is unique and ground-breaking: "Virgin would probably have been happy with a main theme and a few cues, but I thought that rather than creating an orchestral score like for a movie, I could make one which interacted with the game. So I've written over three hours of music, which is unique in the genre, and over 400 cues."

"These are designed to relate to other cues, but not necessarily in the same way each time. So if, say, you go down an alleyway for the second time, you might find the music is not related to what you heard the first time. I devised a new musical technique of cross-fading any X-cue with a D-cue, which gives about 40 hours of different musical permutations. It was a dream score for me. With a big feature film score, all the parameters are set to the frame and the second before you start. But with *Broken Sward*, I could write different music for the same occurrences so that if, say, a character goes down an alleyway, it could make you think very differently about what he's thinking."

Pheloung is proud that he has broken new ground ("To me, it's a brave new world, and I want to get in on the ground floor") and is keen do more work along similar lines: "I want to take it to the extreme. I could easily have written five or six hours of music, because it's such a beautiful game, but we were restricted to two CDs." Pheloung scored the music for an orchestra and added the structural elements by breaking it up into sampled chunks. This, he says, was a mammoth task: "It's like doing six feature films at once. The biggest feature film score I've done was a two-hour one for *Nostradamus*. That had two and a half sides of letter paper of cues. *Broken Sward* took up more than 400 sheets, which were pasted all round the walls of my studio."

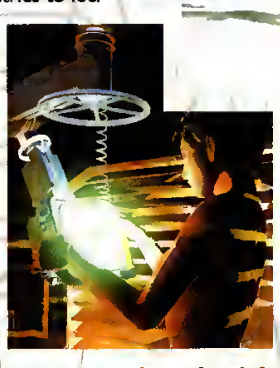
He's full of good words for the game: "What's beautiful about it is that I can play it with my two little kids and the whole family around one monitor." And his soundtrack has undoubtedly enhanced it, both in aesthetic terms and even in gameplay terms: "The music is full of clues. Sometimes, these are total red herrings, but sometimes they're genuinely helpful."

As if more proof were needed of the newly developed serious approach among game developers toward music, Japanese developer Warp has commissioned Michael Nyman to produce the soundtrack for its forthcoming Saturn spectacular *EO* (currently commanding huge amounts of attention in Japan). Warp head honcho Kenji Eno has this to say about the project: "Nyman wrote the music for Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*, but at the time he was not so famous in Japan. First, I wanted to use Ryuichi Sakamoto, who is very famous, but I couldn't find what I was looking for in his music. Only Nyman's would fit my game. We asked him to perform 14 pieces for *EO* with a bigger orchestra (he usually performs with smaller groups) — some are just for piano and some are full orchestral ones. *EO* has CG and polygon parts and Nyman's music can be listened to in the CG parts, the introduction, and the ending. We will also release a music CD from the game."

These are clearly the days for the music and videogame industries to feel comfortable with each other. There are factions that will shun such underground efforts as mere transitory affliations, while companies like Psygnosis will continue to be appreciated by a hardcore of dance music gameheads.

Of course, the *real* revolution in game music will come when such quality musicians sit down and work out how to produce a flexible, interactive score. The danger with this current trend is that some musicians aren't being challenged by the discipline of interactivity and are merely asked to hand over CD tracks. This is the lazy approach. Imagine if these artists could create a program that automatically arranged a muscial theme to accompany your game on the fly. This is the holy grail of game music right now, and let's hope that these musicians realize it. Still, in the meantime, this could be the start of a beautiful friendship...

I've written over three hours of music for *Broken Sword* which is unique in the genre



Berrington Pheloung (left) created over three hours of music for Virgin's *Broken Sword*, while Warp's *EO* employe e score by Micheel "The Pleno" Nymee (above right)

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Atari's Historic Road to Nowhere

Atari is dead. Now, Don Thomas, the former "Voice of Atari," recounts the grand history and painful demise of the U.S. company that first started the whole videogame ball bouncing...

As of July 30, Atari ceased to exist. The company that introduced videogames to the world in 1972 failed 24 years later under the weight of a struggling Jaguar business that showed no sign of recovering. Don Thomas's first-hand account of Atari's roller-coaster history (he ran both the public relations and customer service divisions for many years) has been posted at various locations on the Internet. But **Next Generation** is glad to reprint his story here, as both a tribute to the company responsible for much of videogaming's glorious past, and as a warning to the current kings of the hill that success can be lost as easily as it can be found. **Next Generation** salutes Atari, and respectfully acknowledges that we wouldn't be here today had Atari's pioneers not paved the way for so many others to follow.

Over to you Don Thomas:

It's odd to imagine that an institution as big and as powerful as Atari once was has been shut down in recent days. The real amazement for me is that it was all accomplished without a measurable

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It was only as recently as mid 1995 that Atari executives believed things were finally taking a better turn

flinch, either from inside or outside the gaming industry.

I can understand that gamers wanted to push *Pong* out the door early in the timeline. I can appreciate that the classics such as *Missile Command* and *Asteroids* do not push 32-bit and 64-bit systems to any technological limits. I know all these things intellectually, but the heart cannot face the truth that the world and the corporate machine known as Atari could not find an amicable way to coexist.

On Tuesday, July 30, 1996, Atari took each and every share of its company (ATC), wrapped them all in a tight bundle and presented them to The JTS Corporation; a maker and distributor of hard drives. On Wednesday, the shares were traded under the symbol of JTS. Within a few weeks, the remaining staff of Atari that were not dismissed or had not resigned, moved to JTS's headquarters in San Jose, California. The three people were assigned to different areas of the building, and all that really remains of the Atari namesake is a Santa Clara warehouse full of unsold Jaguar and Lynx products.

It was only as recently as mid 199S that Atari executives and staff believed things were finally taking a better turn. WalMart had agreed to place Jaguar game systems in 400 of its Superstores across the country. Largely based on this promise of new hope and the opportunities that open when such deals are made, Atari invested heavily in the product and mechanisms required to serve the WalMart chain. But the philosophical beliefs of the Atari decision makers that great products never need advertising or promotions put the WalMart deal straight into a tailspin.

With money tied up in the product on shelves and in distribution costs, not much was left to saturate any marketplace with advertising. While parents rushed into stores to get their kids Saturns or PlayStations, the few that picked up the Jaguar were chastised by disappointed children on Christmas Day.

In an effort to salvage the pending WalMart situation, desperate attempts to run infomercials across the country were activated. The programs were professionally produced by experts in the infomercial industry and designed to enable Atari to run slightly different offers in different markets. In spite of the relatively low cost of running infomercials, the cost to produce them and support them is very high. The results were disappointing. Of the few thousand people who actually placed orders, many of them returned their purchases after the holidays. The kids wanted what they saw on TV during the day. They wanted what their friends had. They wanted what the magazines were raving about.

Doa Thomas witaassed firsthaad maay of Atari's tumultuous ups aad dowas. Now, ha asks that Atari is aot forgottaa

[But] the few parents that picked up the Jaguar were chastised by disappointed children on Christmas Day

In early 1996 WalMart began returning all remaining inventory of Jaguar products. After reversing an "advertising allowance" Atari was obligated to accept, the net benefit Atari realized was an overflowing warehouse of inventory in semi-crushed boxes with firmly affixed price and security tags. Unable to find a retailer willing to help distribute the numbers required to stay afloat, Atari

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virtually discontinued operations and traded any remaining cash to JTS in exchange for a graceful way to exit the industry's back door.

Now that JTS has "absorbed" Atari, it really doesn't know what to do with the bulk of machines Atari hoped to sell. It's difficult to liquidate them. Even at liquidation prices, consumers expect a minimal level of support that JTS cannot offer. The hundreds of calls they receive from consumers that track them down each week are answered to the best ability of one person. Inquiries with regard to licensing Atari classic favorites for other applications such as handheld games are handled by Mr. John Skruch who was with Atari for over 13 years.

Yes, it looked like a toilet, and yes, the ill-fated CD-ROM add-on for Jaguar was tha final hardware nail in the Atari coffin

In 1983 no one needed to buy a new system. This, combined with Warner's obscene spending, amounted to a daily loss of over $2 million

Unfortunately, programmers grossly underestimated the time required to develop 64-bit games. The jump from 8-bit and 16-bit was wider than anticipated. In addition, Atari was already spread thin monetarily but was required to finance almost every title that was in development.

After the initial launch, it took Atari almost a year before an assortment of games began to hit store shelves. Even then, having missed the 1994 holidays, many of the planned titles were de-accelerated to minimize problems caused by rushing things too fast. Consumers were not happy, and retailers were equally dismayed. The few software ads Atari was able to place in magazines often stated incorrect release dates because dates changed almost every day, although magazine lead times can be up to 120 days in advance.

It was in 1983 that Warner Communications handed Jack Tramiel the reins of Atari. By this time, Atari was often categorized as a household name, but few households wanted to spend much money on new software, and the systems were lasting forever. No one needed to buy new ones. That, combined with Warner's obscene spending, amounted to a daily loss of over $2 million. Atari was physically spread all over Silicon Valley with personnel and equipment in 80 separate buildings, not counting international offices and manufacturing facilities.

Since Atari couldn't afford to launch Jaguar nationwide, it was introduced in New York and San Francisco first

In spite of Nintendo's claim that their newest game system is the first 64-bit game system on the market, Atari actually introduced the first 64-bit system just before Christmas in 1993. Since Atari couldn't afford to launch the system nationwide, the system was introduced in the New York and San Francisco markets first. Beating Saturn and PlayStation to the next-generation punch, Atari initially enjoyed moderate success with the Jaguar system and managed to lure shallow promises from third-party companies to support it.

Tramiel took only the home consumer branch of Atari and forced Warner to deal with the arcade division separately. Within a few years, Tramiel took the company public, introduced an innovative new line of affordable 16-bit computers, and released the 7800 videogame system.

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To accomplish these miracles for Atari, Tramiel implemented his "business is war" policies. Of the 80 buildings in Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, and Milpitas, almost every one was amputated from Atari's body of liabilities. The people were fired; the work, the heritage, and the history were liquidated. Those who survived were unsympathetically required to fill in the gaps. While most tried, few actually found a way to successfully do what a dozen people had done before them.

Atop the mountain, Tramiel pressed with an iron thumb. All Fed/Ex mailings were required to be pre-approved by one of a handful of people. "Unsigned" purchase orders went unpaid regardless of the urgencies that inspired their creation. Employees found themselves spending valuable time trying to find ways around the system to accomplish their jobs. Many lost their jobs for bending the rules or failing to find a way to make things work.

But as horrible as it all sounds, it actually was the only way to protect Atari as a company and give it a chance to survive as it did. Tramiel's introduction of the 16-bit computer was initially hearty in the United States, but it went extremely well in Europe. Europeans were not accustomed to "affordable" technology, and, although the Atari computers were not IBM compatible, it didn't matter because people could afford them. Tramiel's private laugh was that the computers were sold at prices much higher in Europe than Americans were willing to pay for them. As a result, most of the machines were being shipped to European destinations to capture the higher margin.

Nolen Bushnell founded Ateri in 1972. The neme is the English trenslation of the Jepanese word for "check" in Go

This enraged Atari loyalists in the United States. While waiting months for stores to get deliveries, international magazines touted ample supplies. Those in the know within the U.S. became dismayed. The remainder never knew Atari was slowly abandoning the value of Atari's name recognition, in pursuit of quicker profits and a new market in Europe and around the world.

Employees spent valuable time trying to find ways around the system to accomplish their jobs. Many lost their jobs for bending the rules

On a technical level, Atari 16-bit computers were ahead of their time. For less than $1,000, consumers could enjoy "multimedia" before the phrase was ever really widely used. The icon-based working environment preceded Windows' popularity although the essential attributes of the two environments were very similar. Built-in MIDI became an instant hit in the high-end music industry. Tasks were activated and manipulated with a mouse, and the system accepted industry standard add-on peripherals such as printers, modems, and diskettes.

With all the genius that went into the technology of the machines, very little equivalent genius went into promoting and marketing them. Tramiel was the founder of Commodore Business Machines. When he introduced the PET computer in 1977, Tramiel discovered he didn't have to call up a single publication. Instead, they all flocked to his door demanding an opportunity to see the product. News

Sam Tramiel, son of Jeck Tramiel (who founded Commodore end bought Ateri in 1983) wes in control at the very end

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Now that JTS has "absorbed" Atari, it really doesn't know what to do with the bulk of Jaguars and games that Atari hoped to sell

magazines. Science Journals. Business newsletters. Newspapers. They all came with microphone, camera, and pen in hand. Any time a switch was added, a new 4K application was announced, or a new retailer was signed, the press smelled a story and wanted to cover it.

Today, a new videogame announcement may generate a request from any of the dozens of gaming magazines for a press release, but a lot of costly work has to be done to assure fair or better coverage. Editorial people are swamped with technical news. Samples are mailed regularly to their attention. Faxes fly in through the phone lines, and e-mail jams up their hard drives. It takes a lot to grab the press's attention.

While Atari retained hopes to be successful with the Jaguar, Atari's marketing people were fighting established standards in the industry with severe handicaps. Since cartridges (the Jaguar is primarily a cartridge-based system) were so expensive, editorial people were required to return them before new ones would be sent. Editors often assign reviews to freelancers, so retrieving cartridges was not always easy. Additionally, reviewers often love their work because they get to keep the products they write about.

Regardless, the few magazines willing to cover Atari products were often turned away because of a lack of programmable cartridges. In-store signs and posters were sometimes created, but many retail chains charge premiums to manufacturers that wanted to display them. Some direct mail campaigns were implemented, but Atari often could not afford to keep the things being advertised on schedule. Therefore, the ads were published and distributed, but the product was not available.

Clearly, Tramiel's experience with the world beating a path to the door of a company making a better mousetrap no longer applied. The world had revolved a few times beneath him and he never noticed. The tactics used to successfully sell Commodore computers were simply antiquated notions from the past.

Meanwhile, Sony launched PlayStation with over $500 million in marketing funds. Today, PlayStation is considered the most successful next-generation gaming machine throughout the world. Sony bought the market. Tramiel's Atari never learned how, and could never afford, to do this.

In the 1990s, the rest of the world discovered that IBM-compatible computers were becoming more powerful and more affordable. The world always did want computers at home just like at the office, and companies like Dell and Gateway exemplified the industry's trend toward home-based office computers. As a result, companies like Commodore, Atari, and NEXT couldn't compete any longer.

While the dedicated user base of each of these systems felt abandoned by these companies having to leave the computer market, the inevitable prevailed. Commodore jumped ship, NEXT changed business goals completely, and Atari invested what they had left in the Jaguar game system. Even today, Apple is kicking and screaming. As good as Apple was at creating a huge niche for itself, it focused too heavily on education. When kids grow up and get jobs, they want business machines. Unfortunately for Atari, IBM was always the business standard.

When one examines Atari's history, an appreciation grows for how many businesses and people were a part of the game over the years. Atari's founder, Mr. Nolan Bushnell, started Chuck E. Cheese Pizza. Apple Computer was born in a garage by ex-Atari employees. Activision was founded by Ace Atari programmers. The list goes on.

But for some pathetic reason Atari's final days came and went with no tribute, no fanfare, and no dignified farewells. Why? Where did all the talent go? Where are all the archives? Where are the vaults? Where are the unpublished games and where are the originals of those that were? Why hasn't a company stepped forward to adopt the remaining attributes Atari has to offer? Where are the creditors?

What's happened to all the properties and sites? Where are the databases, warranty cards, promotional items, notes on meetings, unanswered mail? Who owns P.O. Box 61657? Who works in the old Atari offices? Where do consumers have their systems fixed? Who is publishing new games? Who sells Atari products? Why are people talking about Atari online?

I'm an ex-Atari employee and proud to have been. I'm still an Atari devotee and proud to be. To me, these are questions that all deserve answers, but who in 1996 and the future will ask them?

The best people to ask are those who have exposure to the public. If you believe Atari left us without saying good-bye, contact Dateline at dateline@nbc.com. If you *really* believe, write to newspapers and other news programs. A letter in your own words would be great! I'd spend money for a thorough retrospect on Atari. Wouldn't you?

At least, wouldn't it be nice to say a proper "Good-bye"?

1. Atari's 16-bit handheld, the Lynx; 2. The Atari 7800; 3. The STBook (a portable ST); 4. The 32-bit Falcon; 5. Atari's TT — an ST spin-off; 6. And — of course — the original VCS, the game system that for many of us was the start of it all (clockwise from top left)

The end of an era

Atari's story is one that certainly should not be forgotten by anyone who has ever enjoyed a videogame. A special forum for discussion has been set up on *NG OnLine* at http://www.next-generation.com

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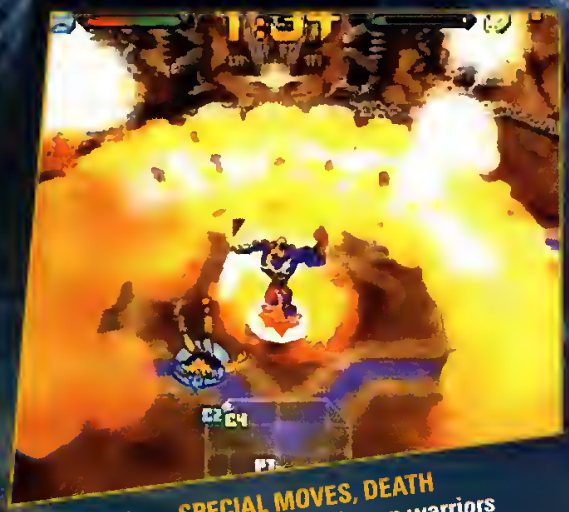

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The art of videogames has evolved considerably since the days of *Pitfall*, and a select few game artists now proudly rank among the world's best CG (Computer Graphics) artists. **Next Generation** showcases the best of the game industry's output from around the world. Enjoy...

gallery

Up your arts

Erik Holden's droid has limbs, pistons, and joints that mirror tha movamant of a human body, making tha motion-capturad craatura a dalight to watch (abova right)

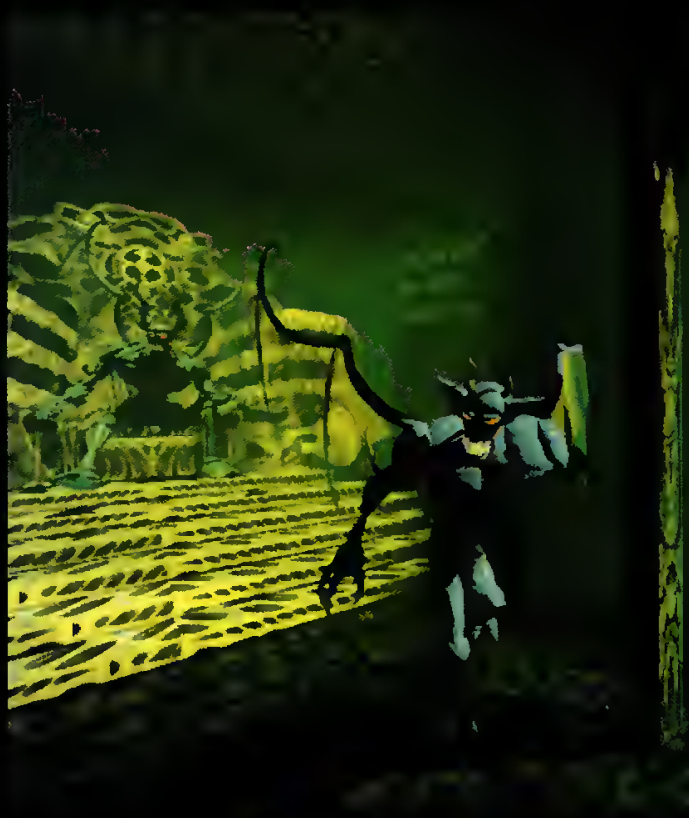
***Loaded* was famous for its strong, brilliant imagas. Mamma, caught in a rara violance-free moment, took ten days to model and contains 100,000 polygons (abova)**

Tha Saturn advantura *Dark Savior* (right) includas cut-scanas by Masayuki Hasegawa who was responsibla for *Clockwork Knight*

Erik Holden, graphic artist/game designer, of Advanced Technology Group 2 (ATG2) and Electronic Arts (California), rendered his robot on SGI using *Softimage*. Textures were created on a Macintosh using *Adobe Photoshop*

Momma for *Reloaded*, created by Matt Ferguss, using *3D Studio 4* with *Mesh Paint*, *Metaballs*, and *Bones* plug-ins

Chisel-jawed heroes in *Dark Savior* rendered on SGI in *Softimage* by Masayuki Hasegawa



Deep aquamarine lighting gives the prerendered scene from *Realms of the Haunting* (top and above) an eerie and atmospheric luminosity. The above scene uses 12 lights — two spots, two omni, and eight cones — as well as a fog effect, all given a green tint

The deadly machines of *Mr. Tank* (left). Offering unique design with a bright mix of color, these roving vehicles are a far cry from the single sprite tanks seen in *Combat*, a long time ago in a game far, far away

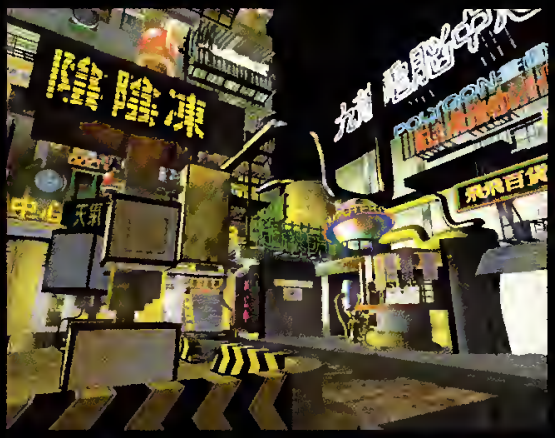
The green room is a 3D map from the *ROTH* editor constructed by Keith Donald. It was then brought into *3D Studio* for rendering. The characters were modeled in *3D Studio* by Berni

***Mr. Tank* vehicles were developed by Rebellion for a PC CD-ROM release**

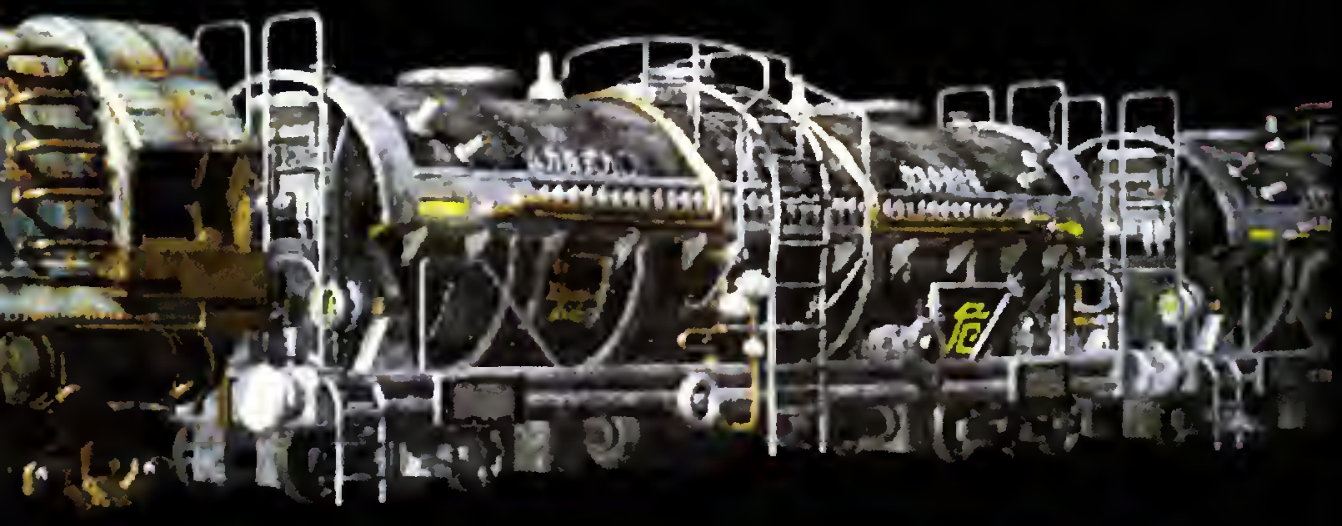
The development of virtual idol Kyoko Date from Holipro remains the responsibility of Yoshitaka Hori. Watch out for those teenage years...

Nakajo Kimura rendered his images for *Kowloon's Gate* in *Softimage*

Music company Holipro has turned young Japanese models into "Idols" before, but Kyoko Data is different — she's a Virtual Idol. Tan staff worked on Kyoko's face, and motion-capture formed the basis of animation. A Kyoko music CD is due, with a real person providing the vocals

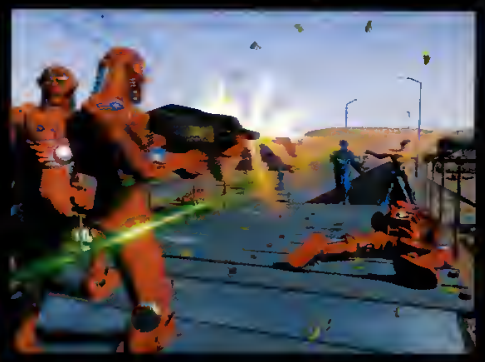


Sony Music Corporation has undertaken an ambitious endeavor with *Kowloon's Gate*, which features 100% pre-rendered graphics



Final Fantasy 7 images were rendered on an SGI using *Softimage*

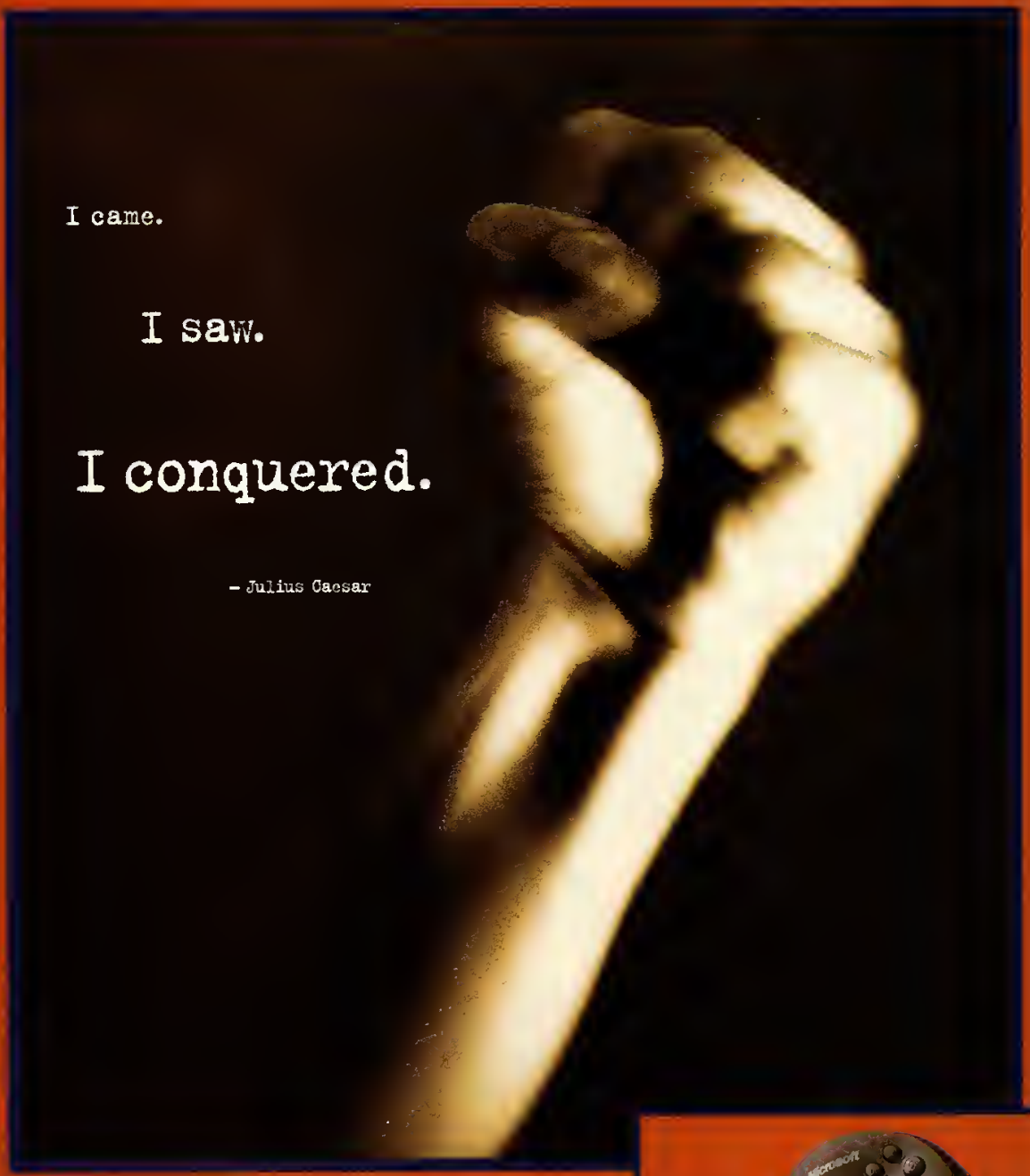
Images for *Final Fantasy 7* were designed conceptually by Akira Toriyama before being passed on to a team of artists. *FF7*'s unique blend of fantasy elements and retro-tech hardware presents an interesting design challenge for Square's artists



Z by Chris Thomas and Terry Catrell using *3D Studio*

Toy Story created by Pixar Studios on Sun workstations using Pixar's proprietary software *Renderman*

Tha Bitmap Brothars did strong character work for Virgin's realtima stratagy wargama Z. Pixar used walls of Sun workstations to ganarata familiar toys on tha computar screen, than bumped them to tha movia scraen (wa'll laava you to figura out which imagas belong to which)



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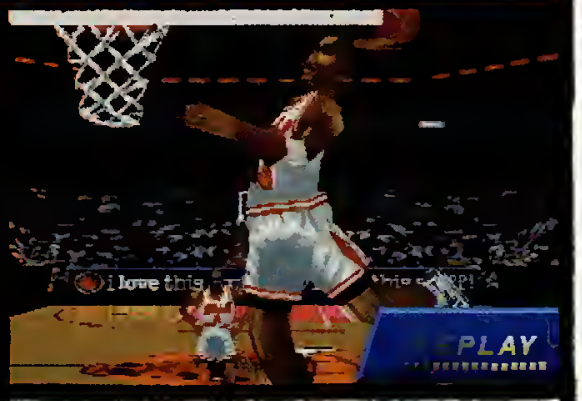

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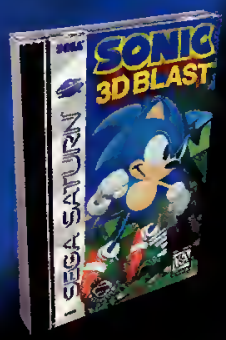

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Street Fighter EX **Arcade** Daytona CCE **Saturn** Dual Heroes **Nintendo 64** Gretsky 3D **Arcade**
Ecstatica 2 **PC CD-ROM** Tenka **PlayStation** Cloak **PC CD-ROM** Independence Day **Multi**

Previews for a changing world

Has gaming truly progressed into the next generation? Could be. This month, two venerable gaming series finally get a much needed 3D facelift: everyone give a warm hello to *Pitfall 3D* and *Street Fighter EX*. Also, take a look at some games pushing in new directions: *Mr. Tank*, *Cloak*, and *Psychic Force*

124 Esoteria 3 PC CD-ROM
Newcomer Mobeus Designs brings the player into a massive 3D realm

130 Street Fighter EX ARCADE
Is it finally *Street Fighter 3*? Well, no, but at least it's *Street Fighter* in 3D

135 Cloak PC CD-ROM
A new graphic adventure from Sierra that pushes forward with innovative features

138 Armored Fist 2 PC CD-ROM
Yet another Voxel Space 2 project from the company with the patent, Novalogic

141 Spider PLAYSTATION
It's 3D but it's really 2D — can a plucky arachnid make this one work?

149 Pitfall 3D PLAYSTATION
Harry Jr. makes the 32-bit leap of faith — can he survive in a 3D world?

157 Shivers 2 PC CD-ROM
Hapless teens and haunted villages highlight another upcoming Sierra title

163 Queen — the Eye PC
As in Queen, the band — save the world while listening to '70's rock anthems

167 Mr. Tank PC CD-ROM
Too loopy to be sim, can this fun effort from Rebellion find a PC audience?

171 Psychic Force PS-X
The latest wrinkle in 3D fighting games flies onto the PlayStation

173 Tenka PLAYSTATION
One of the first of the PlayStation's next wave continues to shape up

174 Ridge Racer PLAYSTATION
That's *Grand Prix* — the premier PlayStation racing game gets a facelift

179 Daytona CCE SATURN
And *this* is *Championship Circuit Edition* — the Saturn counterpart gets the same

183 Ecstatica 2 PC CD-ROM
More round characters — and surprising violence — from Andrew Spencer

191 Duckman PLAYSTATION
USA TV's brutally cynical 'toon makes the leap to PlayStation graphic adventuredom

197 Conquest Earth PC
Gaseous aliens from Jupiter invade Earth in this real-time wargame from Eidos

201 J2 NINTENDO 64
Enix, of all companies, takes a crack at artificial life — but is that was it *really* is?

204 Toshinden 3 PLAYSTATION
Guess what? Takara learns to count to "3" before Capcom does — hmm...

210 Dark Reign PC CD-ROM
Activision hopes to put a dent into the *C&C* genre with strange units and map editor

212 Broken Helix PLAYSTATION
Konami's 3D shooter fires off bullets and one-liners, and it's got a guy named Bruce

214 Independence Day MULTI
You've seen the movie, now play the game, also courtesy of Fox — Interactive, that is

218 Oddworld PC, PLAYSTATION
It's been two years in the making, but is it a breakthrough in gameplay, or just weird?

223 Gretsky 3D ARCADE
Atari may be dead, but the arcade division is still kicking — and slashing

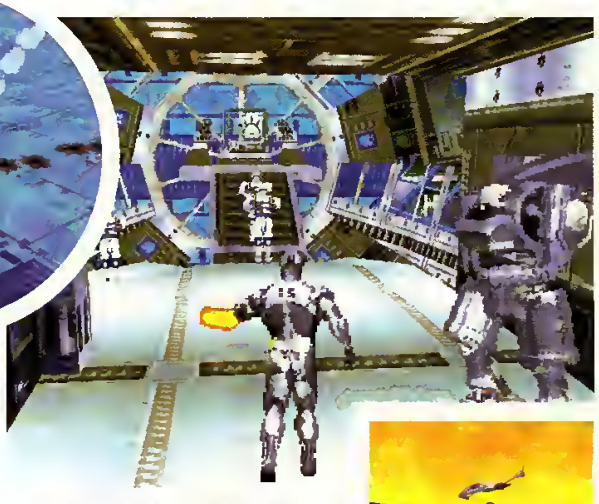
227 Dual Heroes NINTENDO 64
Nintendo 64 finally gets what it should have had from the start — a 3D brawler

Next Generation OnLine, http://www.next-generation.com/

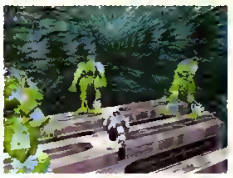
Esoteria 3

Mobeus Design's first game promises to be more than a run-of-the-mill 3D shooter

Huge buildings loom in the distance, but you can approach them, enter, and explore the rooms



Enemy soldiers are programmed to lead the player into an embush (above)



Format:	PC-CD ROM
Publisher:	TBA
Developer:	Mobeus Designs Inc.
Release Date:	Spring '97
Origin:	U.S.

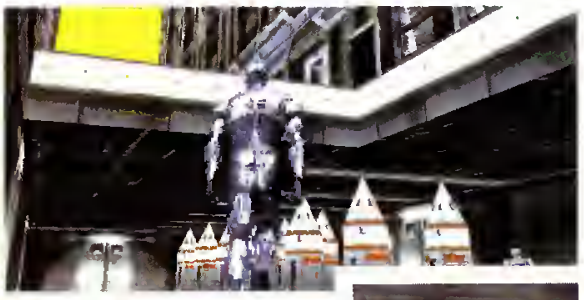
The chicken or the egg argument could be used to describe the relationship between technology and popular new genres of games. While new technology enables entertainment software to evolve, true 3D shooters like *Tomb Raider* and *MDK* currently make up the genre that seems to push technology further. Add to that lineup *Esoteria 3* from Mobeus Design, a Chicago area start-up formed in 1995.

The title planet, Esoteria 3, has recently been divided by civil war. As a self-aware cyborg named Raven, whose metallic appearance gives him a striking resemblance to a boardless Silver Surfer, the player's goals are to infiltrate an enemy city and overthrow a regime bent on manufacturing an army of cybernetic soldiers.

Like *Doom*, large interiors add a greater sense of depth to the world

Once into the game, the innovative camera mechanics become immediately apparent. On the surface, it appears to be a standard over-the-shoulder view. But the floating mouse-controlled camera enables the player to look in a wide range of directions, all from the character's point of view. "You control Raven, and whatever Raven sees, you see," says Chris Lai, Senior V.P. and Game Designer at Mobeus. In actuality, the camera fluctuates between a chase-person view and an over-the-shoulder view, which enables

***Esoteria 3* drops the player into a giant world six scale miles across**



The unique, seemingly endless architecture gives players the feeling that they are in a real city

"These aren't monsters, they're military personnel who are trained to kill you"

Chris Lai, Game Designer

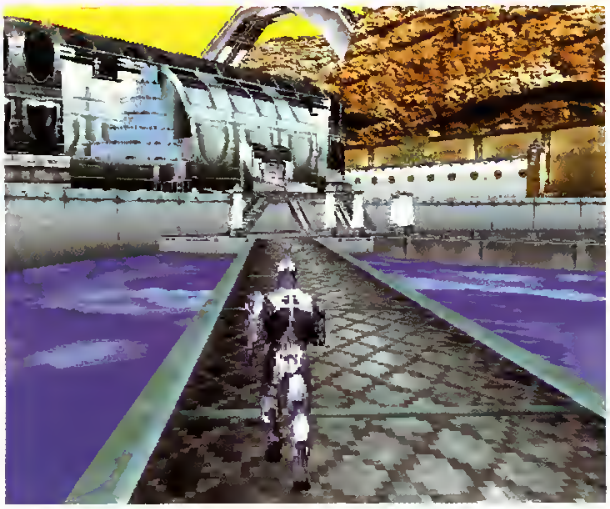
the player to move one way and look and shoot in another.

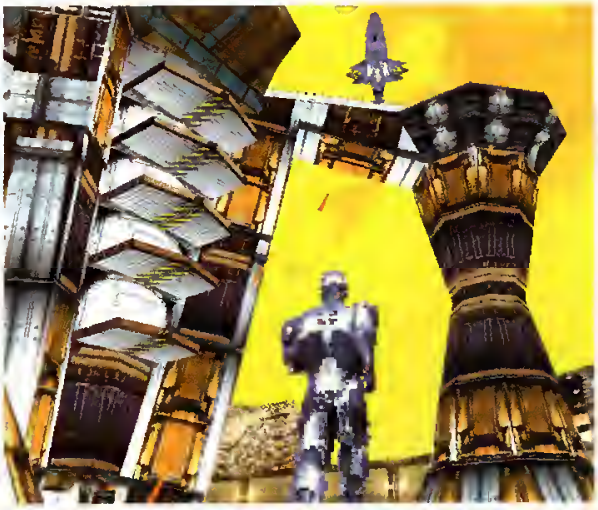
"Instead of manipulating the camera like in *Mario 64*, this camera is directly linked to Raven, so you're never looking from some arbitrary third-person angle," Lai explains.

Unlike the segmented levels of gameplay found in most titles, *Esoteria 3* drops the player into a giant world six scale miles across, in which all the different missions take place. The player runs, shoots, swims, jumps, and lays mines in various environments, including cities, forests, deserts, and aquatic areas.

"You can pretty much go anywhere you want. If you see something, you can go to it," Lai says. "Id did a fabulous job pioneering 3D, and we feel this is the next step." To keep gameplay moving forward, mission objectives uniquely tied into the environment must be met. "Throughout the game you'll see a train. Eventually you need to get on that train, and, during the battle, the train goes out of control. It actually banks and tilts depending on the speed," Lai says, "and if you're standing on top of the train as it rounds a corner, you'll begin to slide off."

Graphically, the world is built with polygons, but the enemies and main character are all sprite-based. "We want to have all the detailed facets of real buildings — the ability to climb on ledges, break windows, and examine objects like tables and lamps," says Lai. "But by using sprite-based enemies, we can have a lot more of them on the screen at the same time. We also want the game to run at a good speed, and it has to be available to all Pentium users." Most of the 25 types of enemies





The second-person perspective lets the player to Raven via the mouse-driven camera, providing an excellent new form of line-of-sight control. While no change of view is needed when crossing this bridge (above left), it is essential to dodging enemy aircraft fire raining down from above (above right)

ng alphas

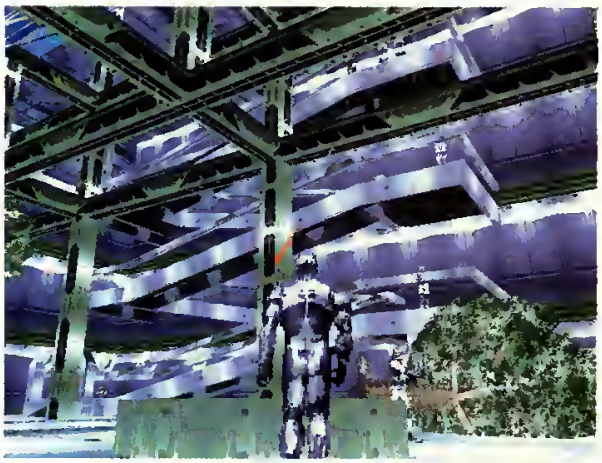
"It's not just gonna be another 3D action game. We're trying to expand on a lot more than that"

Chris Lai, Game Designer

are humanoid soldiers who look similar to Stormtroopers. Some obligatory mech-looking robots and some particularly-nasty flying robots even exist in the game.

"These aren't monsters, they're military personnel and robots who are trained to kill you," Lai says, noting that the computer's AI will be tricky because it's programmed to draw players into an ambush.

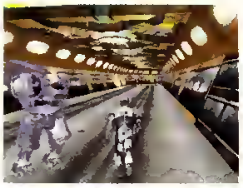
Weapons exist in primary and secondary forms: a primary weapon will attach itself to Raven's body and draw power from him for unlimited shots, secondary weapons require Raven use ammo. Raven can pack one of each type of weapon. Of course, multiple special weapons will be available, including a cloaking device and some extremely deadly cluster-bombs.

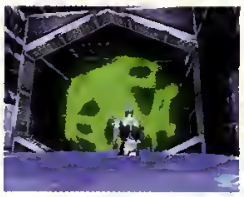


Esoteria 3 will also feature interactive sound and some unique death animation for each of the enemies. More importantly, it will support 16 players for networked competition. "But it's not just gonna be another *Quake* or another 3D action game. We're trying to expand on a lot more than that," Lai insists, maintaining that much of what's been shown only demonstrates the basic engine. Lai is hesitant to say much more about what will be added.

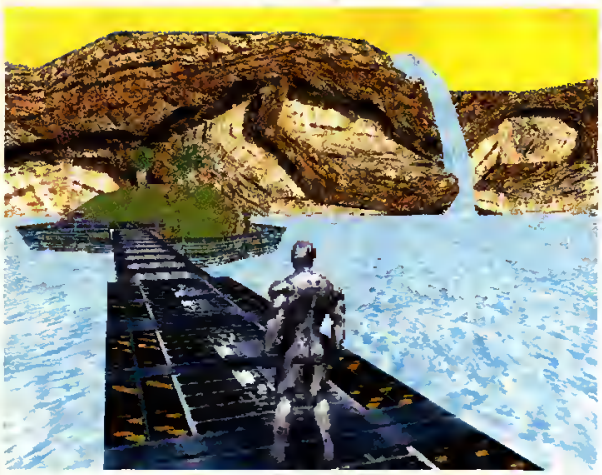
"We don't like to talk a lot about the game's features unless we have them to show. As gamers ourselves, we know the worst thing is an over-hyped game that doesn't live up to its hype," Lai says.

We couldn't agree more.





Elaborate nightrises (top) and long hallways (middle) each pose a unique challenge to the player



***Esoteria 3* not only puts the player in hostile urban environments (top), it enables them to explore forest and desert terrains as well (above). Weapons are useful no matter where Raven finds himself**

These two renderings are representative of two classes of enemy soldiers. Yes, they are as tough as they look. It's up to you, as Raven, to defend yourself against them

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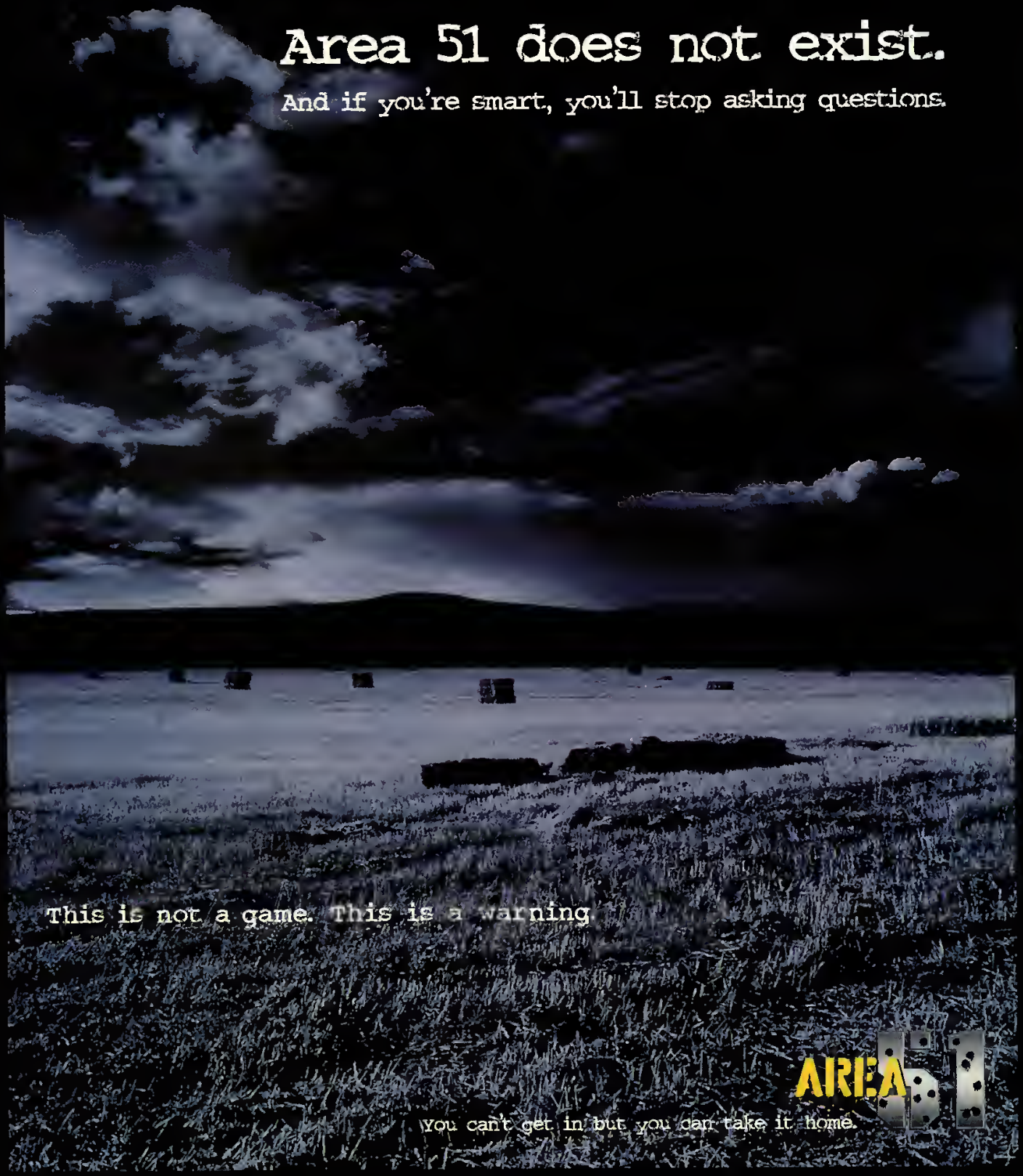

MIDWAY

The #1 Arcade game shows you what your government won't.

MATURE M AGES 17+ ESRB

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Street Fighter EX

It's 3D... but it ain't number three

The fighters look similar in design to those seen in *Tekken 2*. Classic characters like Ken and Ryu have made a fairly smooth leap from 2D to 3D (top left). A new character, Doctrine Dark, throws his spear (right)

_EX_ is being developed with the same PSX-based technoiogy that was used to create _Star Gladiator_

Format:	**Arcade**
Publisher:	**Capcom**
Developer:	**Capcom**
Release Date:	**Winter**
Origin:	**Japan**

At this rate, there will never be a *Street Fighter 3*. Think about it — by diversifying the *Street Fighter* franchise into, most recently, *The Movie*, *Alpha*, *vs. X-Men*, and *EX* brands, Capcom moves the series away from ever having to live up to that critically incremental number.

Staple moves return with staple characters. Ryu executes the Dragon Punch (above) and Ken hurls an ever-popular fireball at Skullo (left)

But of all the *Street Fighters* since *SF2* (now five years old), this one at least potentially looked as if it could've earned the sacred "three."

Regardless of the name, *EX* is currently being developed with the same PSX-based technology that was used to create Capcom's first 3D fighter, *Star Gladiator*. Of the eight selectable characters (no word on who's the boss or who's hidden), four staple *SF* veterans make their polygonal debut. Co-heroes Ken and Ryu, Zangief, and Chun-Li are now joined by four all-new characters: Skullo, a skeleton-suited warrior; a kick-boxer named Pullum; Doctrine Dark, who throws a rope and spear like *Mortal Kombat*'s Scorpion; and an as yet to be named, but "very serious," fourth brawler.

Considering *Star Gladiator* ported fairly quickly and easily to the PlayStation, we should expect *EX* to do the same. However, at press time, Capcom is keeping typically mum about this coin-op title, never mind console conversions. Either way, it will be interesting to see how well the first family of fighters holds up in the polygon world of Team Tekken and the Virtua Fighters.

ng

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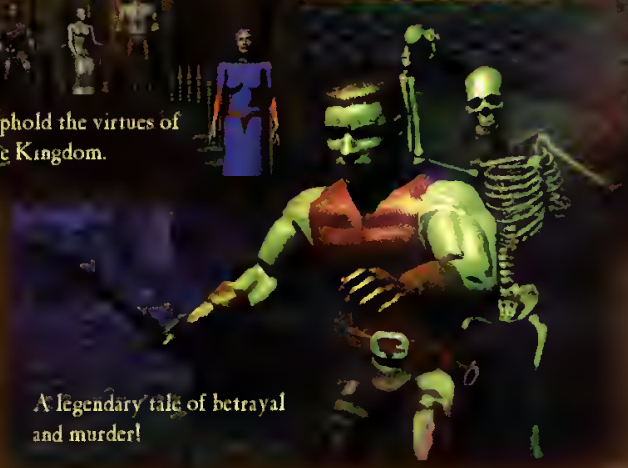

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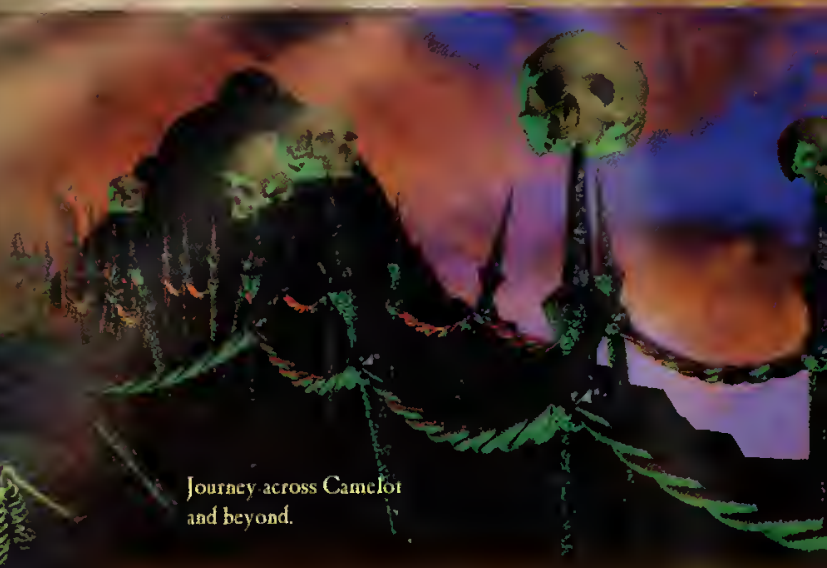

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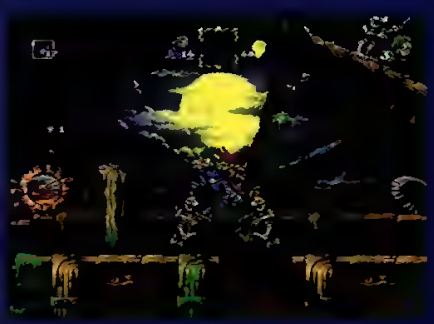

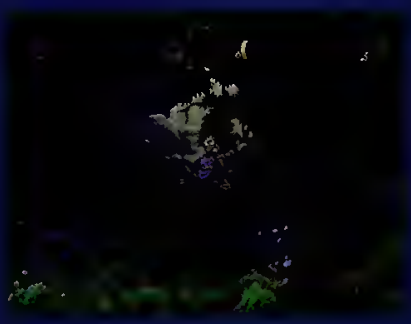

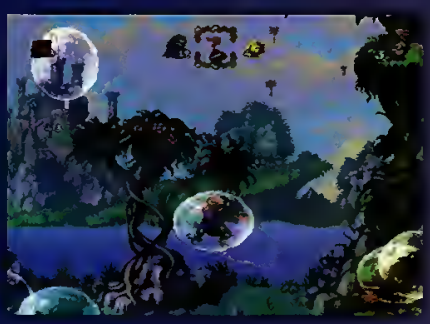

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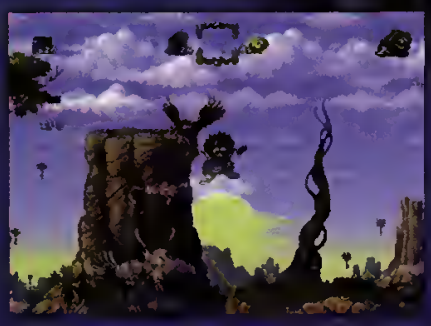

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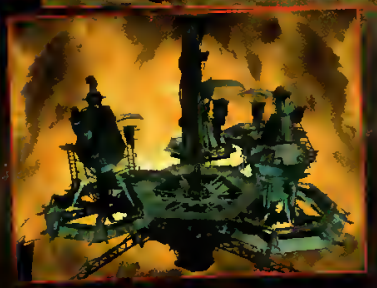

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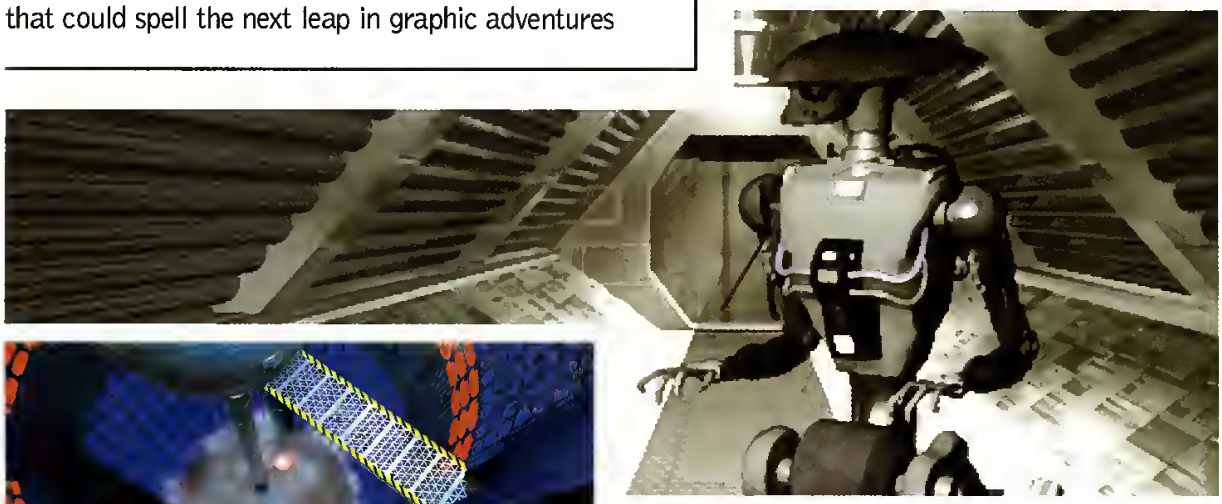
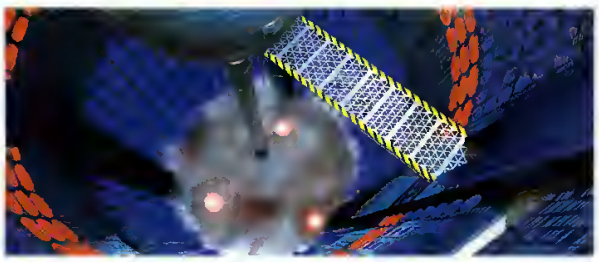
Cloak

Sierra forges ahead with a new interface and structure that could spell the next leap in graphic adventures





With your remote control droid cast adrift on an alien planet, you must help it elude the mind-reading enemy scum and save the human race

Format:	**PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**Sierra**
Developer:	**Sierra**
Release Date:	**March '97**
Origin:	**U.S.**

Any short list of the world's most prolific publishers of graphic adventures would certainly have to include Sierra. In fact, the company all but had the genre to itself from the late 1980s through the early '90s. Now the company hopes to push the envelope once again with its new "sci-fi spy thriller," *Cloak*.

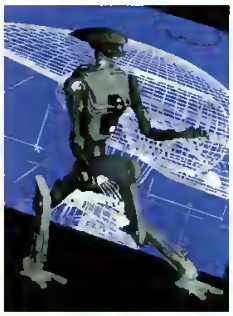
On the player's homeworld Altopia, rumors surface that the inhabitants of enemy planet Baccos (known colloquially as "Bulbs") have developed a technology which can enslave the minds of humans. As an agent of Altopia's key espionage division, the player is unable to infiltrate the Bulbs directly , since their psionic abilities render any physical disguise useless. Instead, a surveillance robot designed to pass as a domestic droid is sent in, controlled by the player through a telepresence pod.

This twist rather neatly collapses the distinction between the player and the player's character, since all the player's character does during the game is essentially watch a viewscreen and work through a computer interface. Lead Designer Mark Engelberg brings to the project a wealth of experience in this area, as a former VR designer for NASA (where he worked on a simulation of the Hubble telescope servicing mission), and other educational and entertainment VR applications.

However, unlike what you might expect from a VR team, Engelberg and the rest of the *Cloak* team didn't opt

"I've burned out on games that are big on exploration but lacking in interactivity"

Mark Engelberg, Lead Designer



Believe it or not, this freaky-looking character is your persona in the game

The inhabitants of the enemy planet Baccos are referred to derisively as "Bulbs" — for fairly obvious reasons

ng alphas

Although the game is played partly from a first-person perspective, players must also make use of third person views while spying through surveillance cameras

Designer Mark Engelberg brings to the project a wealth of experience as a former VR designer for the Hubble telescope servicing mission

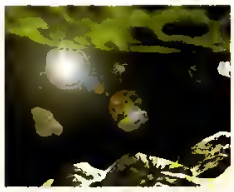
for a fully modeled on the fly 3D world. Instead, each room or area is a "node," where, through a process similar to Quicktime video, the player has the freedom to pan around 360 degrees and zoom in and out. "The full degree of freedom in something like *Doom* is a real plus," Engelberg explains, "but it's not so good for us because we wanted the graphics quality to be very high. Second, from a game design standpoint, I've burned out on games that are big on exploration but lacking in interactivity. What I'm trying to do is direct people to what's interesting, to make the movement very quick and almost invisible so they can get right to things they can interact with."

Cloak makes extensive use of the multithreading capabilities within Windows 95. So, while playing through an area, the game can simultaneously begin loading the information for branching areas. Then, once the player makes a choice and moves on, load time is nearly imperceptible.

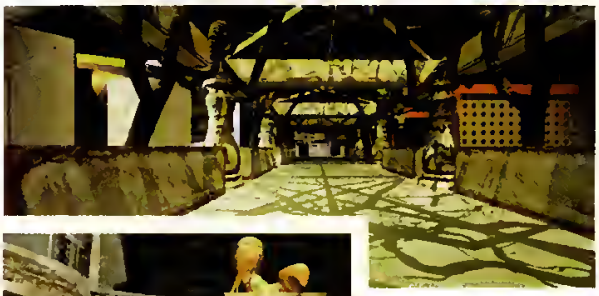
Multithreading is also responsible for another of *Cloak*'s interesting features: the multi-window interface. "This came directly from the desire to not have delays in gameplay," Engelberg says. "Although we've cut the load time, even best case there are still times when something loading freezes up the whole window. Well, why should that hang the whole system? Why not suspend just the thing that's waiting and let you keep doing other things? Well, if that's going to be effective, you have to have other things to do." Any of the game's three windows can display at any time the robot's POV, the view from security cameras under the player's control, an information database, the inventory screen, or any other resource the player has uncovered.

"One of the things I'm proud of," Engelberg continues, "is that the puzzles are very diverse. I have a background in puzzle design, and most of the puzzles are purely informational in nature. I don't want to give anything away just yet, but the thing I like best is that the puzzles would be totally valid if you were really there — there's not much picking up objects and figuring out how to apply them." For example, one puzzle involves getting two correct songs to play on a pair of jukeboxes. Listening to the songs played simultaneously reveals, through overlapping lyrics, the location of an important item.

Whether or not *Cloak* lives up to the goals of its ambitious designers is, of course, still open to speculation. However, with such innovations, it could push the envelope. ng



The Bulbs' homeworld shows an abundance of biomechanical, organic forms



Cloak's production design boasts detailed and imaginative 3D artwork — a nice counterpoint to the unique gameplay

The *Cloak* team on their "inspirational" vacation just before production began (left). The game closely mirrors these early sketches (right)

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Armored Fist 2

Soon to be seen on a PC screen near you: Novalogic's latest Voxel Space project

The Voxel Space 2-generated terrain is one of *Armored Fist 2*'s high points — this kind of high-res landscape doesn't come along every day

Format:	**PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**Novalogic**
Developer:	**Novalogic**
Release Date:	**December**
Origin:	**U.S.**

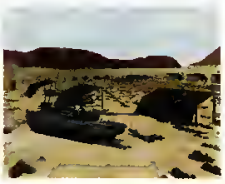
Voxel Space 2 enables higher resolution and finer voxel elements

Novalogic (NG 20) is certainly keeping busy this season, with the release of *F-22, Commanche 3*, and, without much further ado, *Armored Fist 2*. A sequel to one of last year's more intriguing tank sims (NG 02), this latest version uses Voxel Space 2, the high-res update to the company's patented voxel engine, and features the M1A2, General Dynamics's latest upgrade to the preferred hardware of Desert Storm, the Abrams main battle tank.

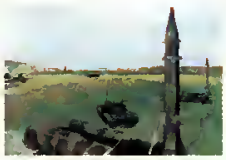
Once again and for the record, whereas a pixel is a 2D picture element, a voxel is a 3D picture element. Unlike building a world with flat polygons, a voxel world is more akin to building a world out of tiny Lego blocks. As such, each small element of the world can have its own appearance, location in space, and (in theory) physical properties. Voxels are especially good at modeling uneven, realistic terrains, so for a sim set entirely at ground level (like, oh, a tank sim, for example) it has distinct advantages over traditional texture-mapped polygons.

So far however, the technology hasn't progressed to the point where more animate objects can be effectively built from voxels (although it is getting there), so *Armored Fist 2* blends its voxel terrain with polygon-based vehicles. Voxel Space 2 also enables higher resolution, and finer voxel elements.

Like its predecessor, *Armored Fist 2* is a combination sim and grid-based wargame, adding a strategic element to the tank-based action. Like all of Novalogic's recent releases, this latest rev is also fully networkable for up to eight players. Given the excellence of the original *Armored Fist*, this upgrade should be a worthy Novalogic effort. ng



The missions are a varied lot (including the obligatory Desert Storm scenarios). However, since the game is fully networkable, players aren't limited to the missions on the disc, they can blow up friends for extra fun



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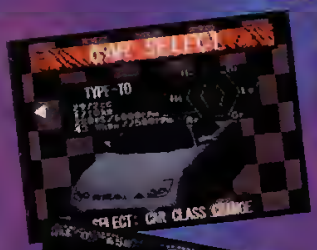

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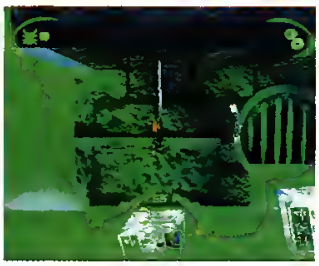
JALECO

Spider

3D or not 3D? That is the question. Boss Studios' 32-bit title offers an eight-legged adventure through a creepy-crawly world

Format:	**PlayStation**
Publisher:	**BMG Interactive**
Developer:	**Boss Studios**
Release Date:	**March '97**
Origin:	**U.S.**

***Spider*'s world is at times beautiful and at times scary. But you can't stray from the preset path**



It's not your everyday spider that comes to the party packing heat-seeking missiles, but then, this is no ordinary arachnid (above). Use your web as a rope (left)

After *Mario 64*, it's hard to play platform games that feature 2D control in 3D environments and not feel restricted. Sure, *Crash Bandicoot* does a good job of hiding its lack of (literal) depth, and *Pandemonium*'s fast pace is specifically designed to keep players from feeling the need to explore the z-dimension. But it ain't easy.

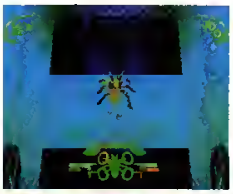
Spider, with all it's cool light-sourcing, polygonal enemies, and 30 levels of gameplay, is essentially a 2D game. And thus it faces the same challenge of making the gameplay so enthralling that players don't feel that the restrictions placed on movement is stealing anything from the experience.

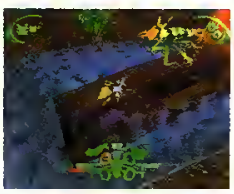
In a dilemma reminiscent of the film *Innerspace*, the player assumes the role of a top scientist who, during a raid on his lab, makes a last ditch mind-swap with a spider test-subject to escape being killed. Now as an eight-legged arachnid hero, the player must foil the invaders and attempt to return to a human body.

Primarily a platform adventure, *Spider* incorporates some shooting elements. While traversing each level, players must exploit the spider's natural abilities, like jumping, climbing walls and ceilings, as well as using silk to lower themselves from dangerous heights. But this is no ordinary arachnid — as a special test-subject it can shoot and power-up with projectile weapons like lock-on missiles and a flame-thrower. Really.

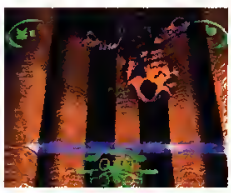
Each level is built with polygons, including the enemy rodents and insects, with Boss Studios making fantastic use of PlayStation's light-sourcing to cast an eerie glow upon the strange, larger-than-life world. An active camera follows the spider with the game camera zooming and panning similar to *Crash Bandicoot*'s.

Spider's designers will argue that 2D control keeps gameplay at an exciting pace. But will it be enough to keep *Mario 64* disciples from climbing the walls? ng





At times, *Spider* switches to different views (top). OK, a cricket is attacking the spider. Sara (above)



Reminiscent of Pulse's *Bad Mojo*, it's easy to enjoy life as a creepy crawly critter

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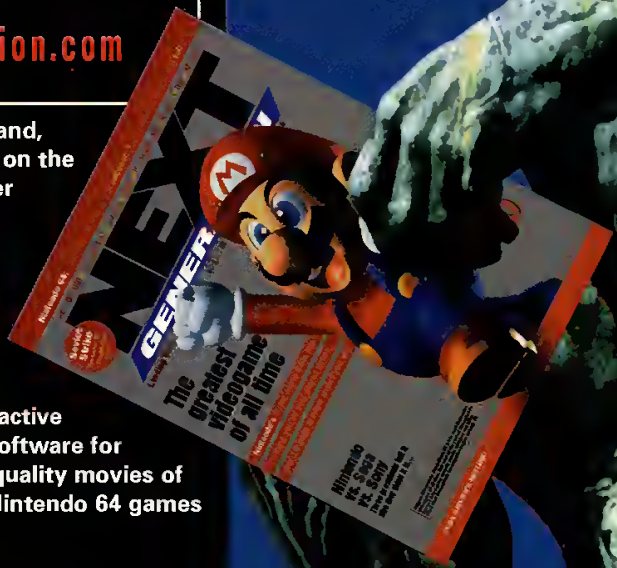

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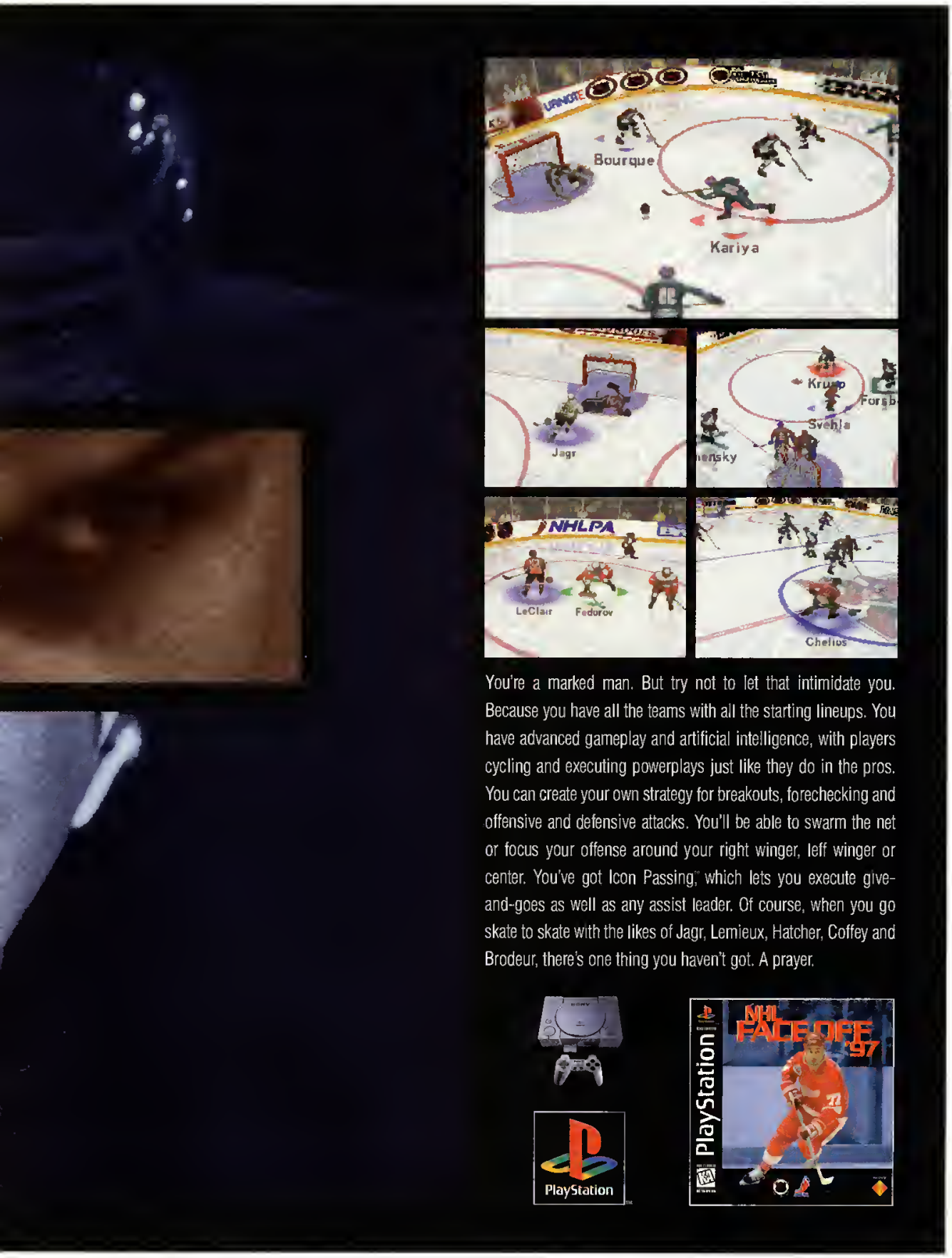

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PlayStation

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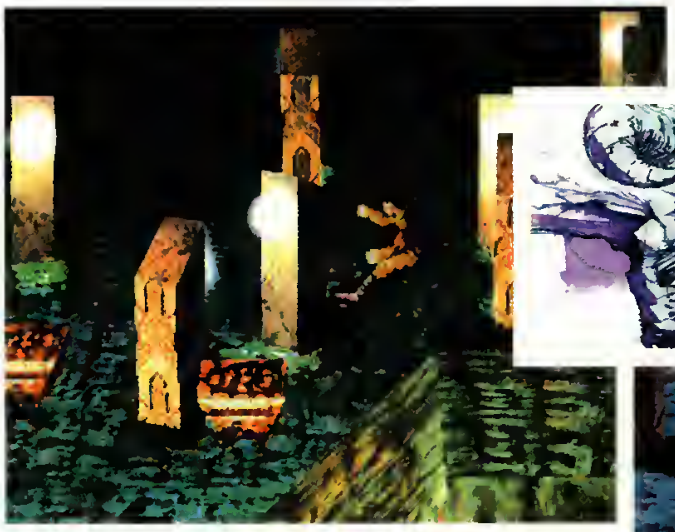
Pitfall 3D

Harry Jr. from *The Mayan Adventure* is back — this time in amazing 3D

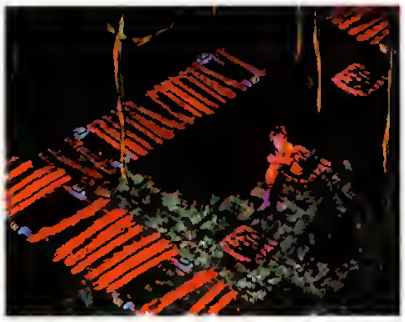


Harry Jr. enters tha 32-bit aga and goes 3D. Doing new things whila keeping familiar elements la one of the dasignera' main challenges

The PlayStation's graphics processor has been put to ase generating moody lighting effects — no two stages look or feel qaite the same

Format: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **Activision**
Release Date: **Spring '97**
Origin: **U.S.**

The original *Pitfall* is one of the classics, and as a series it moved easily from the 2600 to 8-bit, and (some would argue not so easily) from 8-bit to 16-bit. But game technology has moved on again, and *Pitfall*'s Harry Jr. is moving with it into the 32-bit world of 3D graphics.



Sara it'a in 3D, but Herry faces some familiar obstacles — collepsing bridgaa, anyona?

The challenge of the Activision team, headed by Director Tony Grant, is to update the graphics and gameplay while still retaining a connection to the series' roots. "The original *Pitfall* was the first game to break out of the single screen," Grant says, "It gave you the impression of this huge world. So we definitely want to keep that feeling, let the character roam around and make sure the environment is really menacing, that everything's out to get you. We're putting a lot of effort to make sure the player is always surprised."

The Harry Jr. of *The Mayan Adventure* has grown up and become somewhat cynical in the process. He continues to go on adventures, but primarily so he can keep the loot for himself. While searching for a golden idol in the jungles of South America he falls through a dimensional rift. "One of the problems is that there aren't any frontiers anymore," Grant explains. "You can't go to deepest, darkest Africa because people have been there. So instead we're sending Harry to a parallel universe. It's a magical, elemental universe, which is something new and allows us to push the franchise in a different direction. It also lets us have a little consistency to

"Crash Bandicoot was very linear, and we certainly didn't like that"

Tony Grant, Director

ng alphas

"We're putting a lot of effort to make sure the player is always surprised"

Tony Grant, Director

the world, and explains things like why there are morphing creatures and floating platforms."

The game has twenty-four stages, set in eight distinct areas, from jungles and temples to more elemental stages set deep in volcanoes and up in the clouds. "This is Activision's first internally-developed PlayStation title, and it's going well," says Grant, "the system's easy to work with and has a lot of great libraries, which we've been able to modify to suit our needs."

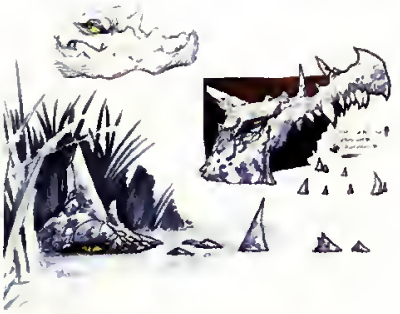
The series is not entirely breaking away from its side-scrolling roots, however. "If you think about *Crash Bandicoot*," Grant continues, "it was extremely linear, and we don't like that. *Mario 64* was really open, but the structure we've chosen is somewhere in the middle. We have definite paths, but they're not as limited as those in *Crash*. They branch a lot, but we wanted to make sure the player always has a sense of where to go. And along with the branching you also have a choice of different goals — rescue this person or collect that item."

This approach may seem to limit the player, but actually opens up certain creative possibilities for the designers. "It's very difficult to create the kind of lush look we're going after by purely using polygons," Grant says. "It's tough, if not impossible to have jungle trees, vines, and so on — so we're mixing 3D with some 2D to fool the player into thinking there's more there."

Lighting and other special effects have been employed to give the game atmosphere. The volcano level, for example, is lit from below with a dull red glow. Many of the enemies morph out of the surroundings, and even burrow up through the ground.

Grant continues, "One thing the PlayStation does really well is move that camera around. Since we're not as open-ended and 'go anywhere' as *Mario*, we can choose the best angle for every area, so when you go here there's a camera tag that brings it in close, and when you go there it pulls back. What we've found is that once you get away from the over-the-shoulder perspective, you can get truly cinematic shots, and this can clue the player. So when the camera pulls back and you can see more of the landscape around you, then by golly more creatures are going to come out and attack you."

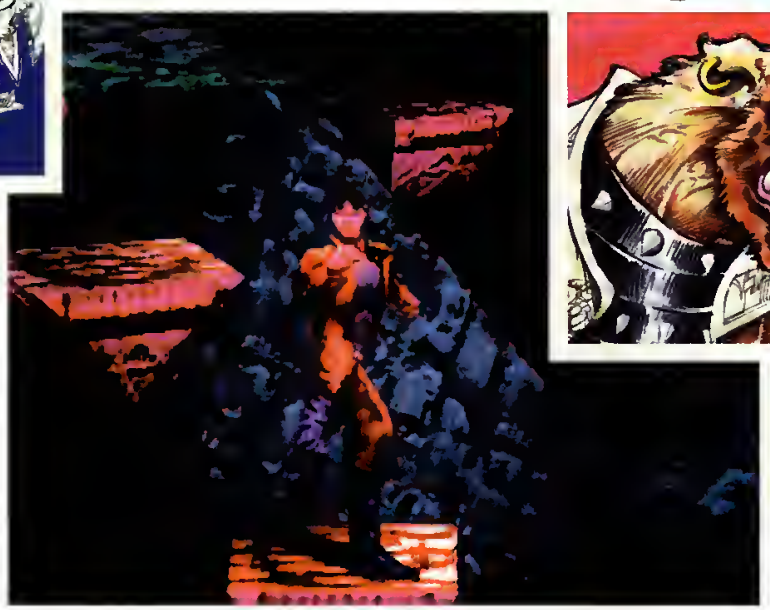
ng



Many of tha creatarae in *Pitfall 3D* morph out of tha surroanding tarrain — jast ona mora thing for the player to worry about

Seye Grant, "Harry le very mach a Han Solo-type of character. Ha begine the game kind of cynical end in it for himself, but by the end, he realizee ha'a a good guy after all"

The amphasia in the game'e cheractar design ie on inventing creatares that are anusual, yet organic to the mystic environment tha game ie set in



Harry doesn't jast ran around (jamping over chasms, of course), he has a fairly wida ranga of fighting moves as well — not quite as meny ee Ken or Ryu of course, but he gets hy

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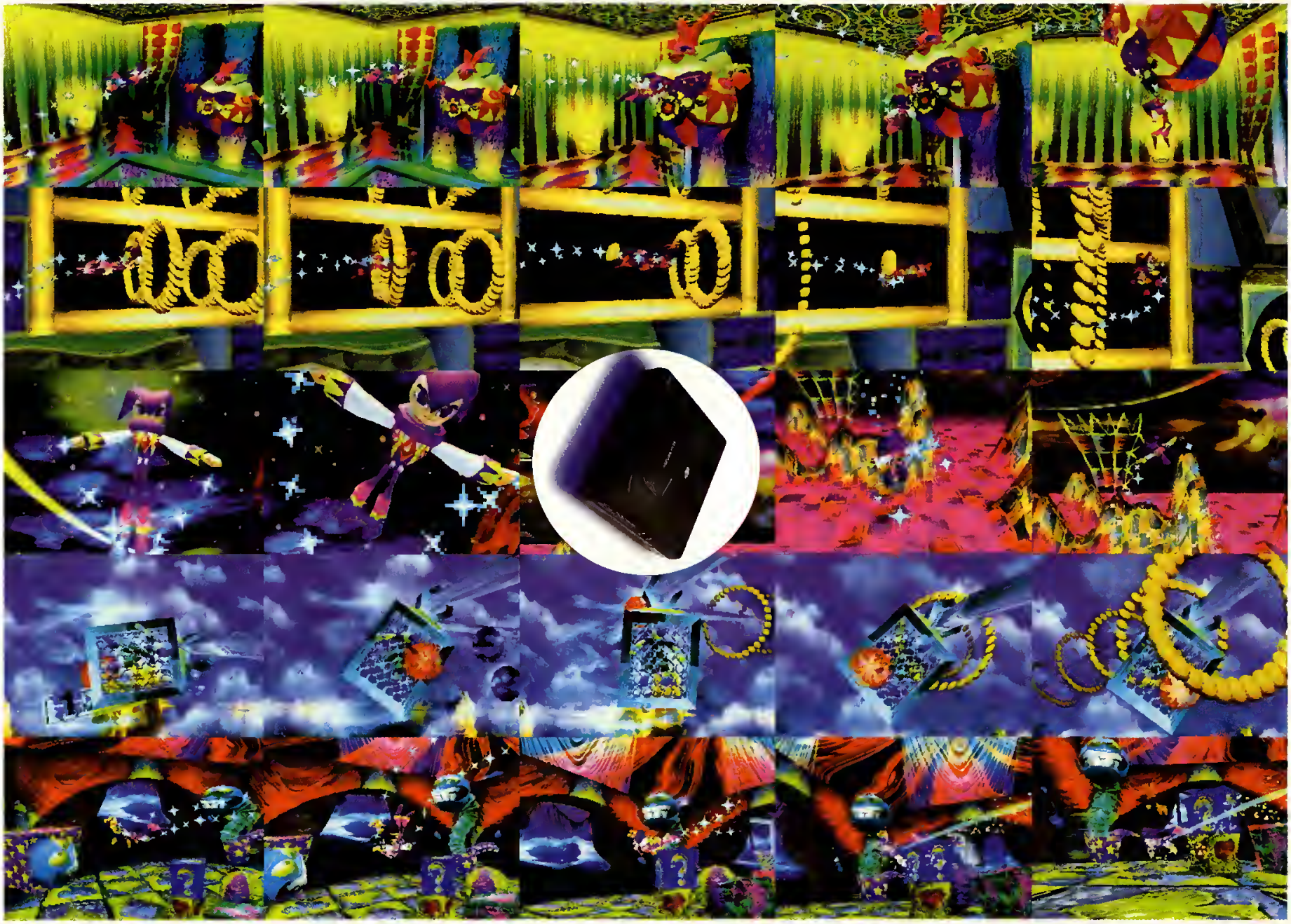

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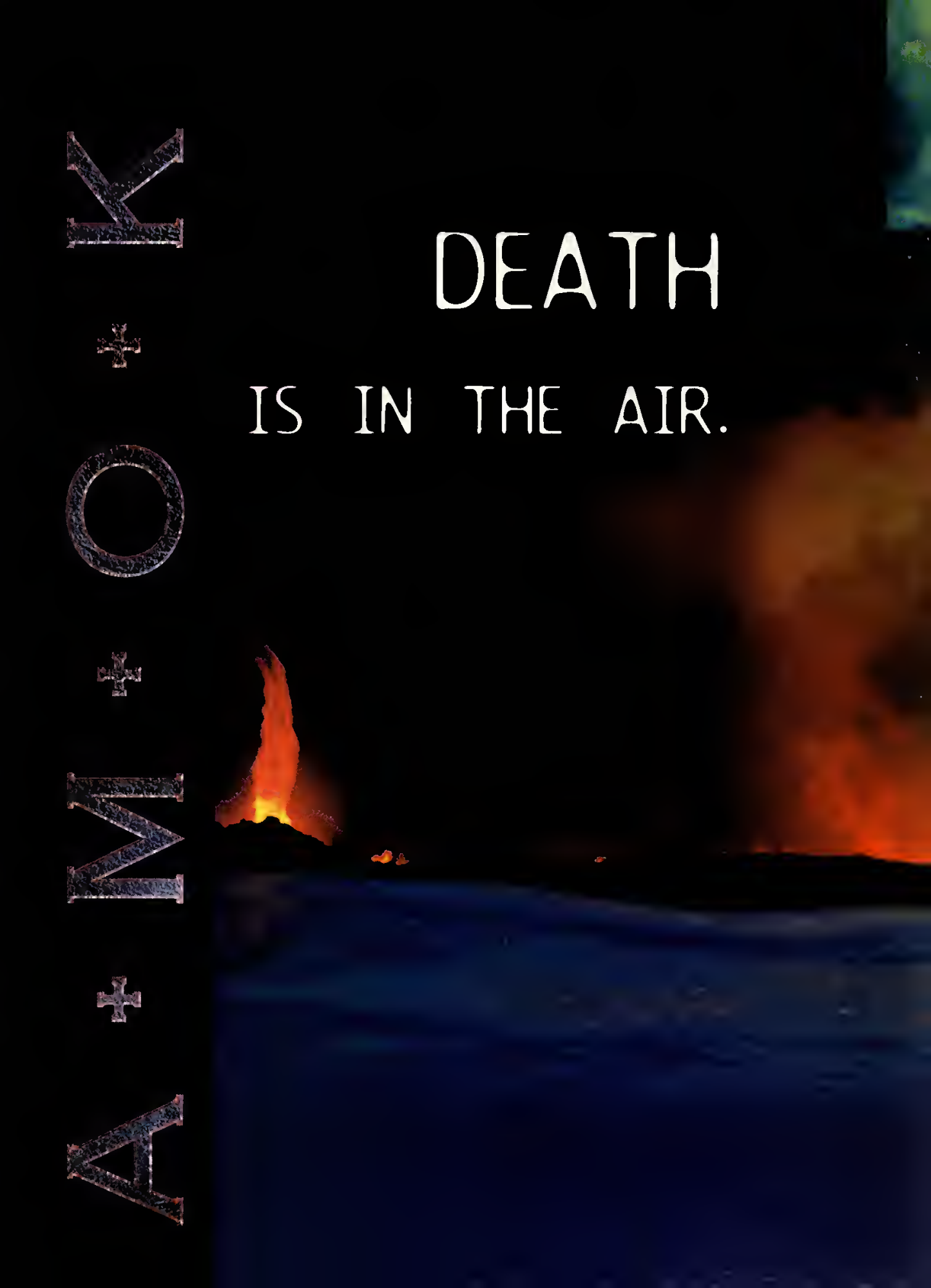
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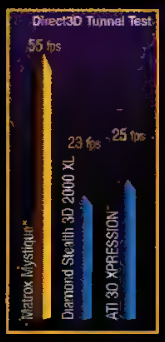

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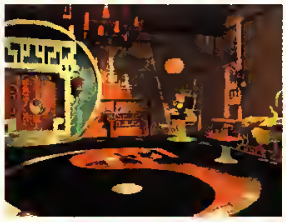
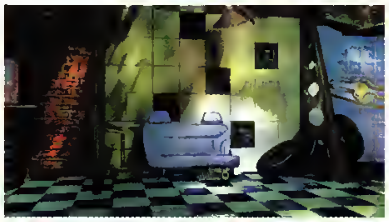
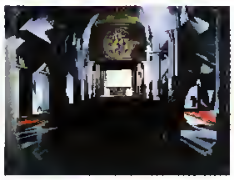
Shivers II: Harvest of Souls

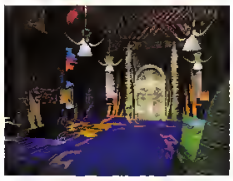
Sierra is back with more hapless teens and another creepy adventure





Many of the game's puzzles revolve around listening carefully for hidden messages in music and finding mysterious Indian "power sticks" — exactly *why* we're not quite sure of yet, but you'll be the first to know





***Shivers'* production design boasts fine, detailed pre-rendered scenery**

The original *Shivers* was criticized for being too much like *Myst*. It was slow, static, and the puzzles were too puzzling. Many players found themselves hoping the idiot teen who snuck into the abandoned museum would go ahead and die, simply to get it over with.

Sierra and lead designer Marcia Bales have taken the lesson of the original to heart. Although the game again centers around a teen looking for lost friends (this time in the oddly deserted town of Cyclone, Arizona), *Shivers II* abandons the static screens in favor of a sweeping, 360-degree panoramic view. The storyline has been worked for nonlinear gameplay and features three different endings depending on the choices made. The production design shows a distinctly Native American flavor, and the screens released so far look excellent.

The design, however, seems somewhat at odds with the game's promised "driving rock soundtrack." Indeed, music appears to play a key role, as many of the clues and puzzles appear as messages in, of all things, music videos. The final game will include five original songs and videos, all of which contain vital information within the lyrics (hmm, perhaps Pat Robertson has it right after all). The game features directional audio channels as well, so players can hear various evil things approaching and know which direction they're coming from before they appear.

Many of the clues and puzzles appear as messages in, of all things, music videos

Format:	**PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**Sierra**
Developer:	**Sierra**
Release Date:	**March '97**
Origin:	**U.S.**

Perhaps the most innovative feature is the integrated Internet chat. While running the game, players can connect to their service provider and talk to other *Shivers II* players over the net, exchanging hints and strategies.

If the original remains something of a disappointment, the sequel would be doubly so if such promising new features failed to be matched by an engaging story and interesting puzzles. If everything comes together however, *Shivers II* can't miss. ng

A tiger? In Arizona? Still, the artwork in *Shivers II* stands out for its dark, brooding, mystical edge and distinctly Native American flavor

THE HIDEOUS SM

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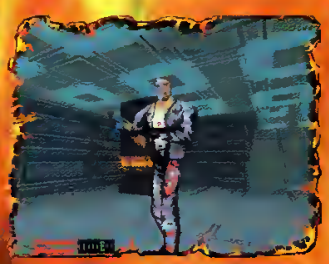

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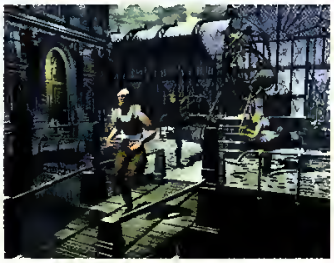
Queen: The Eye

Destination Design leaps into potentially hazardous waters with a project based around rockers Queen. Fortunately though, it looks like it's benefiting from a unique artistic vision



Using some exquisite prerendered backdrops and realtime polygon chrecters, *Queen* looks surpleingly beautiful

Format:	**PC**
Publisher:	**EA**
Developer:	**Destination Design**
Release Date:	**December**
Origin:	**U.K.**

Some readers will be skeptical of Next Generation's argument in this month's issue that the worlds of videogaming and music are coming together. This title, a Queen-inspired PC arcade adventure, could quite easily be presented as "exhibit A."

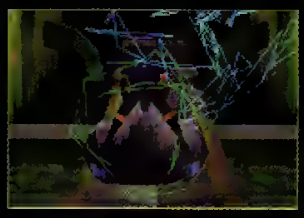
Queen - The Eye is set in an apocalyptic future where the world has collapsed into a brutal global recession. This weird dystopia is ruled by a self-replicating bio-technology called the Eye which is seeking to eradicate all creative individual thought from the human race. As, Dubroc,the game's hero, a player journeys through five domains and eventually destroys the Eye. As with most arcade adventures, the game is full of cryptic puzzles, traps, and secrets and includes over thirty motion-captured, polygon characters.

Surprisingly, *Queen - The Eye* looks gorgeous (the music/videogame crossover has traditionally been difficult to get right), with some astoundingly detailed and atmospheric pre-rendered backgrounds. The characters are also remarkable, featuring real-time facial animation. Not surprisingly, the influence of Queen is visible throughout. For example, each of the five zones — The Arena, The Works, The Theatre, The Innuendo, and The Final Domain — is modeled around imagery and artwork associated with the band. So album art often pops up in the background, tying the game closely with its inspiration. The five CD-ROM set also features an hour and a half of Queen's best known tracks.

As great as it looks, it's debatable just how many progressive rockers are buying videogames. Consequently, *Queen - The Eye*, will probably need to prove itself almost indispensable in order to attract non-Queen fans. Considering that dance and alternative acts are becoming the standard for game soundtracks, there may be quite a stigma attached to buying a title featuring music by your mom's favorite group. On the other hand, the PC does attract more mature gamers including, no doubt, a number of cloth-eared dinosaurs who will revel in its glam rock pretensions. For them, this homage to the ultimate middle-of-the-road band may be just the ticket. Mercifully, the artists at Destination Design have stopped short of including a motion-captured Brian May.

Die-hard Queen fans will certainly appreciate the efforts of Destination Design

A NEW DIMENSION IN RACING.



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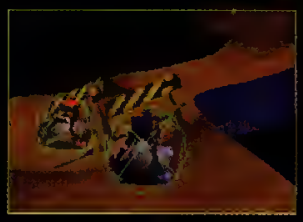

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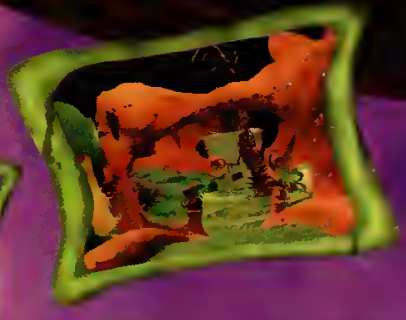

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—NEWSDAY

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Mr. Tank

Rebellion abandons the dodo-like Jaguar and turns its attentions to the PC with an unusual tank game

Format:	**PC-CD ROM**
Publisher:	**TBA**
Developer:	**Rebellion**
Release Date:	**TBA**
Origin:	**U.K.**

The long list of multiplayer options should keep death match fans happy

Sometimes it pays not to be too serious. *Micro Machines*, for example, is one of the most addictive racing games ever created, yet it has none of the complexity of, say, Geoff Crammond's *F1GP2*. Tank games, though, are usually taken seriously by developers. *Armored Fist*, *Tank Platoon*, and *M1A2 Abrams* are all serious simulations with real vehicles and real weapons.

No gap in any market remains for long, though, and Rebellion, responsible for *Aliens Vs. Predator* on the now moribund Jaguar, is in the process of developing a light-hearted tank battle game, curiously named *Mr. Tank*. Instead of having to drive an Abrams across the Gulf sands, you choose a fictitious tank from several available and drive it around an arena, blowing up other players. There's a wide selection of weapons and plenty of power-ups littered around. What there isn't — and this is typical for a title early in development — is a storyline. Paul Topping, Rebellion's marketing manager, told **Next Generation**: "We're considering a futuristic sports setting. At the moment, though, we're just working on gameplay — which is more important, of course."

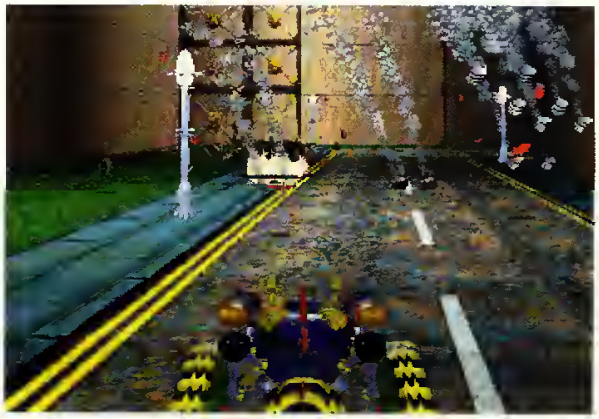
In terms of gameplay, then, *Mr. Tank* looks like a updated version of *Battle Zone*, with the emphasis very much on the multiplayer mode. Owners of a four-plug joystick interface can make use of the quad-screen display, which enables four players to take part on one PC. Further, the game can handle up to eight players over a LAN, either as a team against the computer or just against each other.

Despite the game's multiplayer emphasis, there is a single-player mode: here, you get a set amount of time to destroy a given number of computer-controlled tanks. On later levels, enemies get more

Mr Tenk's backgrounds are garish, to say the least. It certainly makes a change from all those *Blade Runner*-inspired sci-fi settings

Explosions are often huge and impressive, engulfing whole sections of the arena

ng alphas



In multiplayer mode, players can either form teams to compete against computer-controlled opponents or just gang up on other human competitors. Each player's tank has a totally different look: these range from the tractor-like (left) to the more H.G. Wells-inspired (right)

Rejecting sim authenticity for arcade-style gameplay, it could be the nineties answer to *Battle Zone*

intelligent and harder to track.

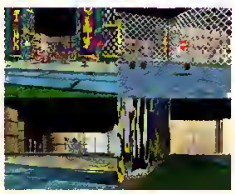
Graphically, the designers have sought to emphasize *Mr. Tank*'s non-serious arcade feel by painting the game in a vast array of gaudy colors. The only arena Next Generation has seen in detail, provisionally titled "The Shopping Mall," is a maze of multi-colored shops and stores, all sporting beautifully designed names and ads. This extensive use of primary colors, plus the abundance of icons, grafitti, and tawdry humour (unappetizing ads for things like "Cheesy Beef," for example, which stress in graphic detail the complete inedibility of the product), give the level an interesting 2000AD look, further distancing *Mr. Tank* from realistic sims.

Sprites rather than polygons are used for the backgrounds and vehicles. This keeps the speed of the game as fast as possible (again emphasizing that this is an arcade not a simulation title), but sprites also enable the use of more colors, accounting for the rainbow-esque nature of the settings.

As for speed, the game runs at over 20 fps on a lowly 486, but this is in the visually underwhelming low-res mode. However, players with decent Pentiums and good graphics cards can expect a similar performance in hi-res.

Along with The Shopping Mall, *Mr. Tank* will include another five to seven different arenas. Designers are toying with the idea of a subway stage, where competitors slug it out in a futuristic underground transport system, and a park area with trees and hills. Suburb, farm, and ghetto arenas are also planned. Although these concepts sound strangely pedestrian, they will no doubt be exploited for any possible twisted humor. Anyway, they're a change from space stations and the clichéd dark sci-fi city setting.

The game's use of cool comic-book graphics and unusual settings gives it an individuality that most PC titles lack at the moment. Further, the list of multiplayer options should keep death match fans happy. However, Rebellion has a lot of work to do. *Battle Zone* was a long time ago, and modern players expect a little more to a game than driving around shooting at things. Not much more, surely, but just a little. Plentiful power-ups, traps, and secret areas will probably be enough to supplement the rather simplistic gameplay. But no doubt the Rebellion team has already thought of all that. ng



The novel quad-screen display enables four players to participate on just one PC

For visual diversity, the game includes rural as well as urban settings. Rural arenas will feature hills and suitably weird foliage

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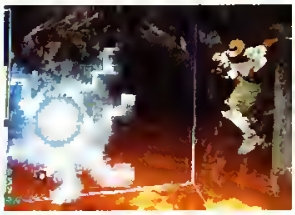
GTE Entertainment

Psychic Force

Taito added to the fighter genre with this singular arcade title. A decent PlayStation conversion would guarantee its success



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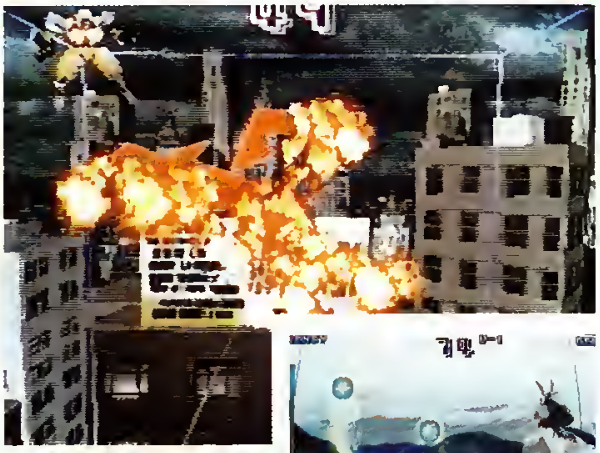

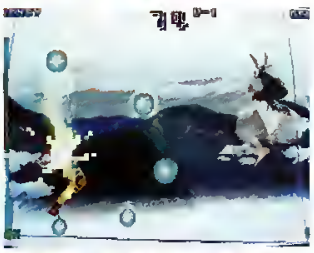

The "floetieg fighters" epproech employed ie *Psychic Force* calls for pleyers to leere e full renge of up/dowe, ee well ee right/left, moves

The 360-degree arena appears to be more than just a gimmick. Plenty of moves exploit it

Format:	**PlayStation**
Publisher:	**Taito**
Developer:	**Taito**
Release Date:	**October**
Origin:	**Japan**

When Taito revealed the arcade version of *Psychic Force* at JAMMA last February, it turned a few heads, despite the unveiling of *VF3* at the same event. At the time, Taito was in serious decline and the crowds were merely vultures circling above the potential corpse of a once-great company. However, *Psychic Force* was a distinctly promising 3D brawler, offering something new: fighters suspended in the air.

It isn't an entirely new concept, of course. Sega's *Dragon Ball Z* experimented with a similar concept in 2D, but the 3D *Psychic Force* boasts great atmospheric urban backgrounds and eight new, varied characters, combining urban themes with traditional Asian and RPG motifs — Samurai characters fight winged warriors and wrestlers, while backgrounds include misty hills, pagodas, and skyscrapers.

The 360-degree aspect appears to be more than a gimmick: there are moves that exploit the environment. For example, players can defend with the "barrier guard," executed with a full circle on the joypad, so the player performs a full backflip.

As tradition dictates, the PlayStation version comes with extra options including Training and Street modes. However, the conversion won't be judged by new features, but on how well the console port replicates the original. If successful, this should be a worthy PlayStation entry.

At least the new "floating fighters" approach will require a fresh repertoire of moves to learn, and for a long time this rapidly tiring genre has been desperately calling out for a little variation. ng

The game featuree eight grephically diverse fighters from different traditioes

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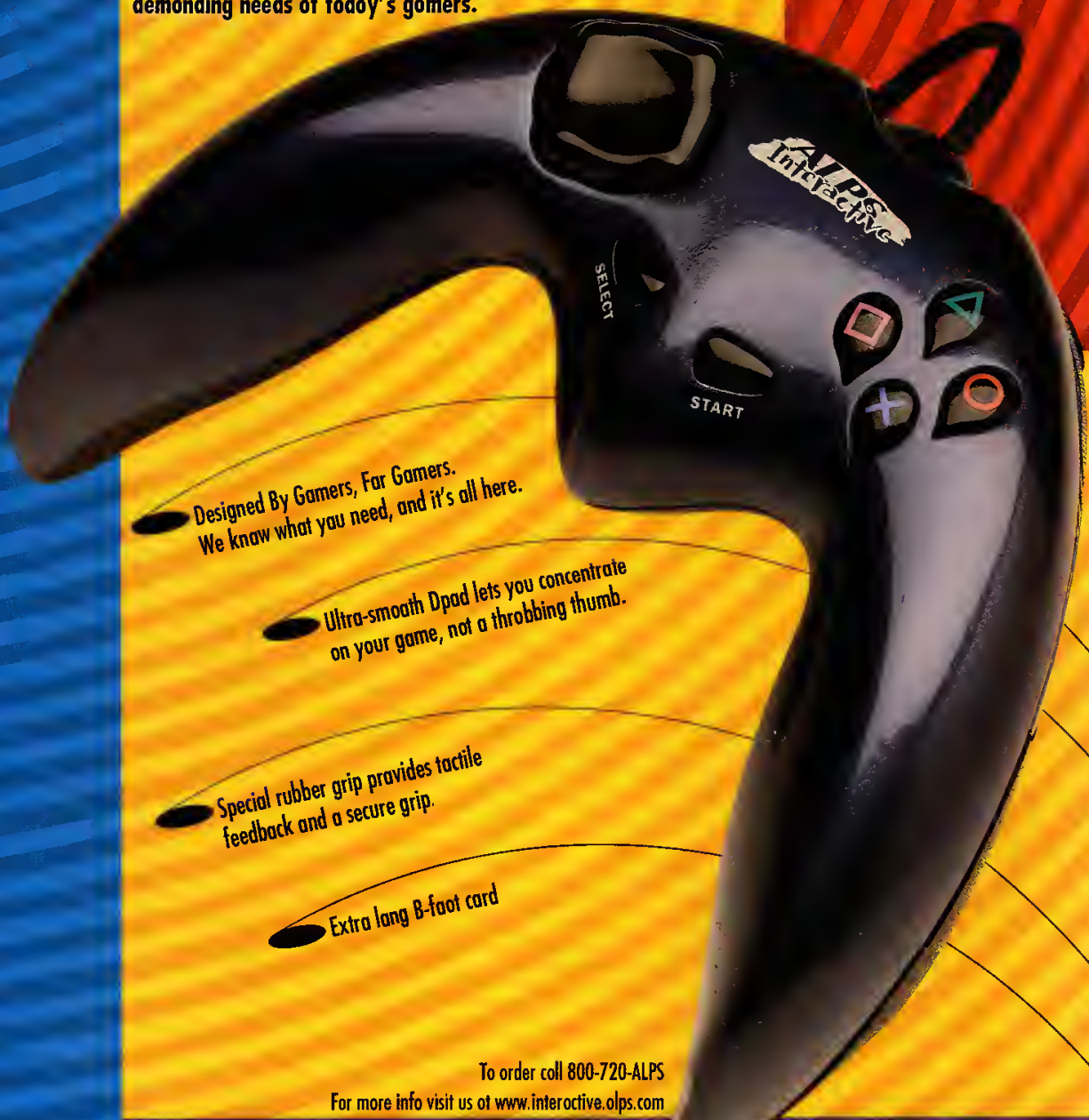

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PlayStation

ALPS Interactive

Tenka

Psygnosis continues to establish itself as a game design powerhouse with its second wave of PlayStation titles — like this one

Tenka will no doubt look familiar to everyone reading this magazine. However, it's important to realize that unlike a certain other first-person shooter for PlayStation, not only is the environment completely polygonal, so are the enemies

Format: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **Psygnosis**
Developer: **Psygnosis**
Release Date: **March 1997**
Origin: **U.K.**

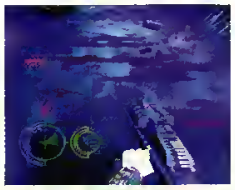
One of the premier titles in the PlayStation's second wave, *Tenka* (NG 17) is well on its way to redefining the state of console 3D shooters as we know them. Like Universal's *Disruptor* (but notably unlike William's *Final Doom*), *Tenka* presents the player with a completely 3D environment, with walls and floors that vary from the flat and level or straight up-and-down.

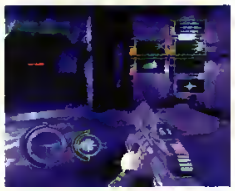
Like *Quake* for PC, the enemies are also completely modeled in 3D. "We have approximately 80 bad guys per level, ranging from simple robots and genetic mutations to the fully animated bionoids," explains Martin Linklater, *Tenka*'s head of production. And they're more than just a bunch of pretty faces: "We've incorporated patrolling heuristics and line of sight calculation in the enemy AI, and they also respond to noises made by the player as he moves through the level. Some enemies will go straight for the throat, while others are more elusive, hiding behind walls and timing their attack. This gives us flexibility when populating a level, and keeps gameplay varied and interesting."

While *Tenka*'s production design is unique — levels range from high-tech to medieval sewer systems — comparisons to the world's premiere fully 3D shooter are bound to crop up. However, Linklater doesn't appear worried. "I don't think anyone would argue against *Quake* being one of the most groundbreaking PC games at the moment," he says, "but you also have to consider that you need a $3,000 PC to run it with anything approaching playability. *Tenka* runs on a standard Playstation and, we think, captures the immersive elements of *Quake* and adds some storyline and variation." ng

"Some enemies go straight for the throat, while others hide behind walls and time their attack"

Martin Linklater, Head of Production





Move, shoot, keep moving, shoot some more — life is good

Just one lonely little guy in this early screen shot, but the final game should have roving packs of different enemies to blast away

Ridge Racer Grand Prix

With this latest addition to its classic series, Namco pushes *Ridge Racer* to the next level

***Ridge Recer Grend Prix* offers a much wider variety of care, end most importantly, tracks over previoue entries in the series, with circuits set across Europe in Perle, Germeny, end Italy**

The *Grand Prix* version will feature a more realistic driving model than ever before

After a flood of racing games this season, many of which left the venerable classic *Ridge Racer* far behind, Namco is striking back with this upgrade. *Ridge Racer Grand Prix*, a working title that will probably change before its release, has been redesigned from the ground up, taking advantage of the ever-expanding list of PlayStation graphics libraries and addressing certain faults of earlier games in the series. As the title implies, the game's most notable new feature is the addition of Grand Prix mode, a circuit of courses set across Europe.

As players compete on the circuit, money is earned for each first-, second-, or third-place win. Between races, players can spend the money to add modifications to their cars. Although no set list of modifications, or exactly what effect these will have, was available at press time, the addition of this feature brings the *Ridge Racer* series into the same semi-sim class as *Andretti Racing* and *Tokyo Highway Battle* — a welcome direction for this arcade-action series.

Format:	**PlayStation**
Publisher:	**Namco**
Developer:	**Namco**
Release Date:	**Spring '97 (Japan)**
Origin:	**Japan**

The control in *Ridge Racar* ceme under some criticiem — the cers waren't "haevy" enough, end it wes too eaey to spin out. For *Grend Prix*, the besic controls should stey the same, but the style of driving will be more technical and realistic

The game features a total of 12 cars — eight can be selected by the player, and four "rival" cars cannot. However, in the *Ridge Racer* tradition, a hidden Easter egg will probably enable players to control these rivals. Also, the game will feature a more realistic driving model than before.

The original *Ridge Racer* is an arcade classic, and while the PlayStation conversion had its problems, it also has its adherents. Not content to sit around and wait for the competition to pass them by, Namco is pushing the series forward in expansive new directions. ng

With such e veriety, playars can say good-bye to tha *Ridge Racer* tradition of one track with e few exteneione

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Daytona USA
Championship Circuit Edition

Recognizing that its aging *Daytona USA* conversion fell short of expectations, Sega appeases fans with a reprogrammed and redesigned conversion of its supreme racing game

The new 3D engine moves more like *Sega Rally* and has less scenery "pop-up" then in the original

Format: **Saturn**
Publisher: **Sega**
Developer: **Sega AM3**
Release Date: **November**
Origin: **Japan**

***Daytona* is still one of AM2's finest moments. Hopefully, thie new version will push the Saturn even further then the originel**

It's been 18 months since Sega converted *Daytona USA*. While few could find fault with its playability and handling, it doesn't compare to PlayStation's *Ridge Racer*. Finally, Sega has decided to produce *Daytona: Championship Circuit Edition*.

Sega stresses that *Daytona CCE* is more than a "remix" — the graphics have been completely overhauled, with courses, vehicles, and textures receiving comprehensive redesigns. Further, these improvements have been made with no loss of frame rate. Sega assures Next Generation that *Daytona CCE* will run full screen at 30fps.

On top of the visual improvements, new gameplay elements have been added. There are two new tracks – Desert City and National Park Speedway – and some new cars, but details about these are currently unavailable. Players will be able to use Sega's new analog pad, and there's also a split-screen mode, which will finally give fans the two-player option they've been waiting for.

Improving this classic is bound to be massively popular with Saturn owners. Sega needs a title strong enough to attract new gamers to stand alongside *Virtua Cop 2* and *Fighting Vipers* in the continued battle against PlayStation. ng

There's now a split-screen mode for the two-player game we've all been waiting for

While *Daytona CCE*'s care look similer to the original game's, the level of detail in the backgrounde has increesed, ee hee the visible distance

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Tecmo Super Bowl's announcer gives true play by play commentary, not just an occasional phrase or two. If perhaps you think he's an idiot, you always have the option of turning him off.

TOURNAMENT MODE

Over the years Tecmo Super Bowl players have let us know about the friendly competitions which sometimes take place. This new version has

a built in tournament mode for a total of 8 players playing one on one till one of the players wins the tournament. Chips and drinks are sadly not included.

DIFFICULTY LEVELS

Knowing that some people haven't been playing Tecmo Super Bowl for years we've included 3 difficulty settings. Easy, Normal and Hard. Our football game gives you the ability to grow with the game. Internally we call this a screen save 'cause you don't have to throw a rock through the TV screen when you get frustrated with the game.

INSTANT REPLAY

If you want to analyze the last several seconds of play, simply pause the game and start the instant replay. In addition you can go frame by frame to fully analyze all of the action. Then again, you may not want to see the interception again, and again, and again, and again.

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NEW PLAYBOOK

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VARIABLE WEATHER CONDITIONS

Ordinary football games sometimes have weather conditions. So far as we know, Tecmo Super Bowl is the only

game to actually change the weather during the game. So one minute it could be raining, and then it could start snowing, or then again stop or actually it's too variable to give you all of the possible scenarios.

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We've tried to highlight some of the most important new features of Tecmo Super Bowl for the Sony PlayStation. Obviously there are more features than we can possibly list. Tecmo Super Bowl is one of the most realistic and sophisticated football simulators ever created. Aside from all of the technical improvements, think about the following:

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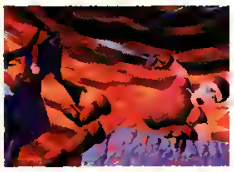
Ecstatica 2

Andrew Spencer Studios uses ellipsoids rather than polygons for all the graphics in *Ecstatica 2*. The result is some amazingly life-like characters (above) and lots of strange 3D "textures" (right). "Triangles tend to make robot-looking figures," explains Spencer. "Ellipsoids are more human"

Next Generation meets the London-based team at Andrew Spencer Studios to find out the truth about ellipsoids

Ecstatica 2 boasts a hero who can fight with fists or a weapon, as well as jump, duck, and dodge



Notice how the wall is made up of ellipsoids, rather than traditional polygons. The result is a more organic look

Format:	PC-CD ROM
Publisher:	Psygnosis
Developer:	Andrew Spencer
Release Date:	January '97
Origin:	U.K.

It's ironic that a game with the title *Ecstatica 2* should come out of one of the scruffiest, most charmless parts of London: a city positively littered with scruffy, charmless parts. But here, in an unfashionable stretch of fashionable Islington, sandwiched between two prisons, is Andrew Spencer Studios: a highly innovative development team obviously completely unperturbed by their less-than-glamorous surroundings.

Although it's a small set-up at the moment — with only five in-house employees — things started even smaller. Spencer spent years working single-handedly on the engine behind the original *Ecstatica*, and when the actual game was ready to go into development, he recruited just one helper: film animation expert Alain Maindron. Together they created what was at the time a visually stunning and complex game — an *Alone in the Dark*-style arcade adventure with dozens of locations, dynamic camera angles, and beautifully animated characters.

Although it has aged somewhat ungracefully, *Ecstatica* had one facet that is still notable: its use of ellipsoids to create characters and backgrounds, rather than polygons. Polygons are, of course, constructed from triangles, so games featuring them always look angular (unless you use thousands, impractical in any game where frame rate is a concern, or use plenty of Gouraud shading). Ellipsoids, on the other hand, are, by definition, circular

Andrew Spencer: "Our aim is to combine high-quality graphics with strong gameplay"

The Andrew Spencer Studios team (from left to right): Neal Petty, Andrew Spencer, Mercue Wegenfuhr, Ken Doyle, and Dave Lowry

ng alphas

The combat system is more comprehensive in *Ecstatica 2* than in many other PC arcade adventures. Consequently, fights are more tactical

rather than pointed.

But what are the advantages of using such a unique method? "It's the question I always get asked," sighs an introspective Andrew Spencer. "The main advantage is the organic-looking characters. Triangles tend to make hard, robotic-looking figures, whereas ellipsoids can be used to create rounded, human alternatives. Ellipsoids can also be more efficient because you can make a much better looking character out of fewer shapes."

The artists working at Spencer's studio also point out that ellipsoids are easier to animate smoothly, giving characters grace and deportment missing from their polygon equivalents.

Because of these benefits, polygons have been shunned again, and the whole ellipsoid engine is now being improved for the much more graphically impressive, hi-res sequel. *Ecstatica 2*, like its predecessor, is an RPG-style arcade adventure. The

Ellipsoids can be efficient because you can make a good-looking character out of fewer shapes

B.S.
[Before Softimage]

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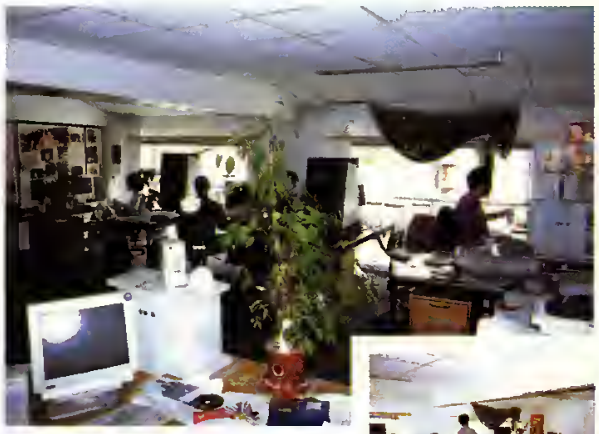
If you thought polygons were the only choice for 3D graphics, think again

object is to kill the demonic sorcerer and his army who have overtaken your castle and then free your betrothed from their satanic clutches.
On the way, you also have to find and put together pieces of the Elder Sign, a powerful talisman that has been smashed by the evil gang.

In terms of genre, the closest modern reference points are probably *Time Gate* and *Time Commando* — all three games feature pre-rendered backgrounds, dramatic camera angles, and a combination of adventure gaming and arcade elements. Like *Time Commando*, *Ecstatica 2* also boasts a hero who can fight with fists or a weapon and jump, duck, and dodge. However, it looks as though the player in *E2* will have much more flexibility during combat than in *Time Commando*. Holding down Alt or Ctrl in conjunction with the arrow keys provides a huge range of defense and attack moves, whereas in Adeline's effort, fighting was just a case of standing there and repeatedly hitting people — not particularly engaging.

Of course, the innovative use of ellipsoids for all characters, backgrounds, and objects also separates *Ecstatica 2* from its



Andraw Spencer Studios is actually a small office in a London suburb

ng alphas

Flat world or round world?

Despite all of *Ecstatica 2*'s potential problems, Andrew Spencer Studios is clearly a team to watch. It's very rare that in the middle of a huge videogame movement (in this case, polygon-mania), one company should go off on its own path and create something visually at odds with everything else around.

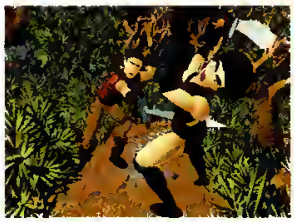
Although at first glance *Ecstatica 2* doesn't look that different, it's a game that has developed in isolation from current trends. There's no 3D Studio, no SoftImage, no FMV — everything you see onscreen has been developed in-house. If the gameplay matches this individuality and spirit of innovation, *Ecstatica 2* could bring credibility back to the PC arcade adventure. It's certainly been a long time coming...

contemporaries and makes it visually unique in today's market. It's a method that has forced the artists to be much more creative and has given the title a truly individual balance, style, and twisted realism. It will come as a shock to polygon worshippers everywhere, but ellipsoids are capable of creating a much greater degree of 3D realism, especially when it comes to scenery. Much of the action takes place in a huge castle and instead of using flat textures with the appearance of stone for the wall and floor surfaces, the artists have used small ellipsoids to create a convincing cobbled look.

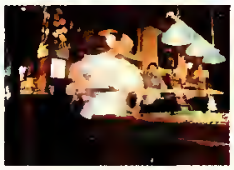
Spencer is cagey about exactly how ellipsoid graphics are created, but he refers to his proprietary editor, which uses fractal algorithms to generate images. "All the objects are algorithmic, which means there's a little bit of programming in each one," he explains. "Trees and plants, for example, are fractals with a bit of randomness built in and a few rules to follow. Ferns are told to get lighter toward the end; plants are told to develop stalks and then sprout into flowers. In a sense, the program, written in C, grows the object rather than builds it." The resulting foliage is not only very three-dimensional but also peculiarly organic and extraordinarily beautiful. Lifelike and complex, it's a look that belongs on the front cover of a *Future Sound of London* CD.

Improvements on the original *Ecstatica* are not just confined to graphics. The first game contained around 80 rooms or locations; *Ecstatica 2* has nearly a thousand, some with two or three camera angles, making for an impressively diverse range of scenery. Away from the main castle setting, there are catacombs, dungeons, gardens, even villages— all explorable by the player.

There are also around 35 characters, from barbarians and wizards to orcs and giant spiders — all have specific skills and individual strengths. Some are difficult to kill but don't inflict much damage on the player; others are more lethal but will die after just two hits. Furthermore, the differences between the enemies are not just based on which type they are. According to Dave Lowry and Ken Doyle, who designed the characters, no two individuals have quite the same stats. It's a pretty sensible attempt to make the fighting in *Ecstatica 2* more realistic than it has been in many other PC arcade adventures.



Forests are filled with beautiful plants and incredibly realistic ferns. The flowers are randomly generated from a menu of attributes



Many new ideas for *Ecstatica 2* were no doubt born during extended after-hours pool sessions

The original *Ecstatica* had around 80 rooms — *Ecstatica 2* has about a thousand

What the team have to get right is the balance between adventure and fighting. Little actual gameplay was on show when Next Generation visited the design studio, but Spencer promises to keep the player entertained, which is necessary if the game is to succeed: Adeline discovered with *Time Commando* that relying too heavily on fighting is not a good idea in a game genre that can't offer the visceral combat found in *Quake* or *Tekken*. *Ecstatica 2* will have more depth than *Time Commando* — the adventure element sounds more complex, and players can pick up an array of objects, not just weapons. The team is not aiming for a totally RPG-like experience. Hopefully, the gameplay won't be compromised to please all.

Although the PC is comfortable with ellipsoid-based system, later platforms might not be so amenable. "The PlayStation is going to be particularly difficult," admits Spencer. "Ellipsoids and the PlayStation don't really go together."

Cinematic camera angles and dramatic animated sequences give *Ecstatica 2* plenty of filmic atmosphere. A good example is this image of the hero getting chucked off a high battlement by two ogres

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Duckman

USA Network's angry duck prepares to go interactive, but who will bring his voice to the game?

Duckman can actually die, but after making you feel stupid about dying, the game brings you back to life at the same spot

***Duckman* has 100 backgrounds, 12,000 frames of animation, hours of dialogue, and over 20 different musical scores by Tommy Tallarico**

"If any one character talks longer than a short sentence, it's gonna be funny"

Darren Bartlett, Creative Director

Format:	**PC-CD ROM, PlayStation**
Publisher:	**Playmates**
Developer:	**The Illusions Gaming Co.**
Release Date:	**Spring '97**
Origin:	**U.S.**

While point-and-click graphic adventures are usually PC titles, Illusions Gaming, the developer behind *Scooby Doo Mysteries* for the Genesis and the 32-bit *Blazing Dragons*, continues to break the rules, this time with the risqué *Duckman*.

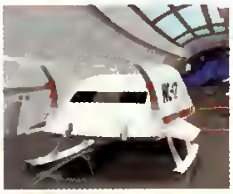
The "Duckman" TV series walks the line between the bizarre and angry sides of humor. In the game, Duckman has lost his show to a new Super Duckman and must get it back by solving a series of puzzles, all with an outlandish style similar to the program that inspired it. There is even a scene in which Duckman crashes the Starship Enterprise into Paramount Studios.

"Humor is important," says Darren Bartlett, Illusions's Creative Director. "If any one character talks longer than a short sentence, it's gonna be funny in the true vein of Duckman — off-beat, non-sequitur, full of sexual connotations." The development team spent several days meeting with the TV show's writers to script out the game's plot and dialogue. *Duckman* will use roughly 15 of the show's pre-existing characters, with about 20 more created specifically by Illusions for the game.

Even the interface ties into Duckman's odd behavior and keeps the game simple. Either he's curious about an object and will "look" at it, or he's angry and going to "use" it in some fashion. This third iteration of Illusions's graphic adventure engine enables production artists to script directly into the program, giving them greater hands-on capabilities.

However, occasional production problems arise. Duckman is voiced by Jason Alexander, George of "Seinfeld." Unfortunately, Alexander declined to voice the game's Duckman lines. "It hurts his voice," says Producer Matt Seymour, "He averages about 150 lines a show. The game has 800 lines and it would destroy his voice. But the rest of the tv cast will voicing their respective characters."

At select points, 3D animation is incorporated into the show's 2D look



***Duckman* will use 15 of the show's characters, with 20 more for the game**

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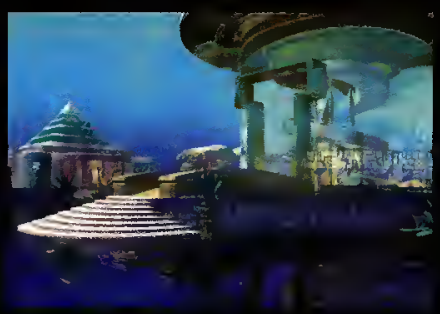

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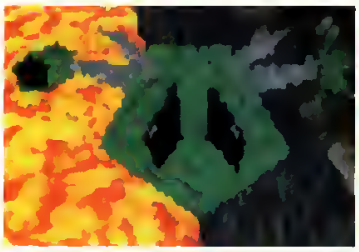

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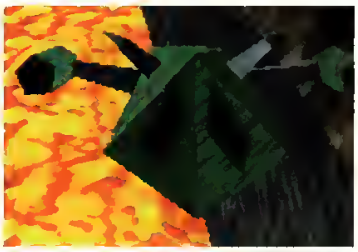

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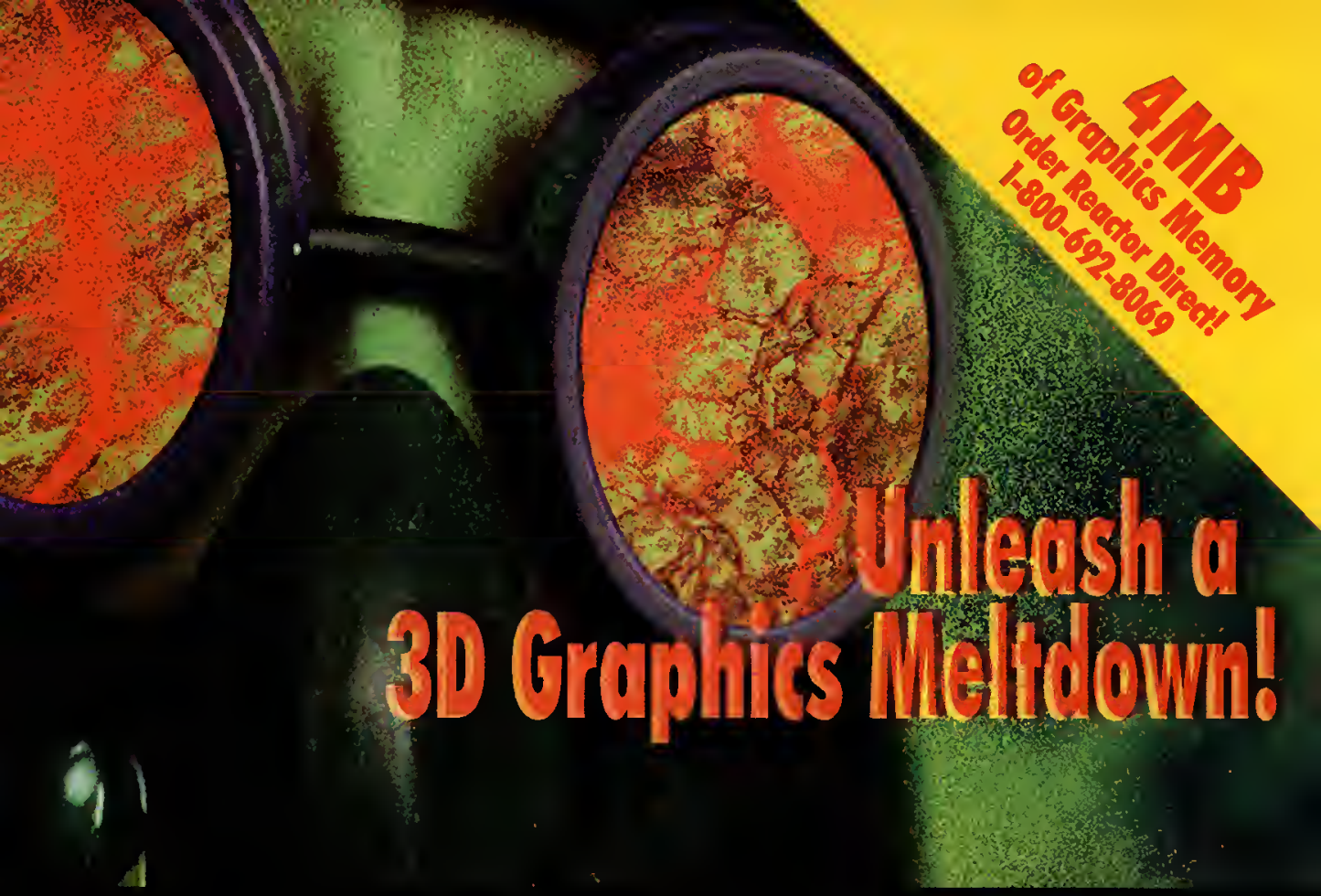

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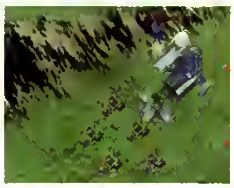
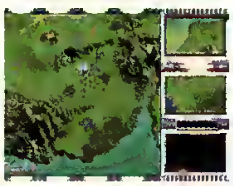
INTERGRAPH

Conquest Earth

The ever-busy Eidos sets out to conquer *C&C* territory with gaseous, morphing aliens

With fantastic scenery, ***Conquest Earth*** looks to deliver a beautiful ride





H. G. Welle would be proud — sure, the alien welkers are from Jupiter, not Mere, but look at them go

Ah, the real-time wargame. Since the success of Westwood's *Command & Conquer* and Blizzard's *Warcraft 2*, everybody wants one, and now Eidos has one of its very own. The gist of the game is somewhat pedestrian: it turns out that when NASA dropped the Galileo probe into the atmosphere of Jupiter in 1995, it was a rather startling event to the "Jupitians" who were living there (Data Design take note: grammatically speaking, inhabitants of Jupiter should be referred to as "Jovians," but we'll let this one slide). To this race of gaseous beings, the solid, rigid nature of the probe was very upsetting, so much so that they decided to invade Earth and wipe out its hard-bodied inhabitants. (Apparently, living in an atmosphere of electrically charged hydrogen and sulfur makes one a little touchy.)

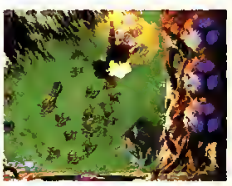
Format:	**PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**Eidos**
Developer:	**Data Design**
Release Date:	**Spring '97**
Origin:	**U.K.**

But what sets *Conquest Earth* apart

from the pack is the amorphous nature of the "Jupitians." Since they're gaseous in form, they have no tools and use no technology. Instead, Jupitians have the ability to simply morph into a variety of lethal forms. In addition, groups of these gas bags can form together to make even larger weapons, such as organic tanks and assault craft. This gives the game a very different strategic dimension when played from the alien side, since any unit can potentially perform any task.

Of course, as with all real-time wargames, there is a plethora of multiplayer options; you can play either head to head, or cooperatively against the computer, as either side. Also, *Conquest* is one of the few games to utilize DirectDraw to produce hi-color (65,000+ colors), nearly photo-realistic terrain and units. Battles affect the landscape, producing charred trees, craters, and rubble.

Whether or not, in the final analysis, *Conquest Earth* can distinguish itself from the rest of the *C&C* wannabes remains to be seen (at press time, little gameplay was in place). However, with its morphing aliens, desperately vicious humans, and sheer graphic excellence, *Conquest Earth* certainly has a shot at being a worthy clone. ng



Fighting strategically advanced aliens isn't easy, but it makes a good game

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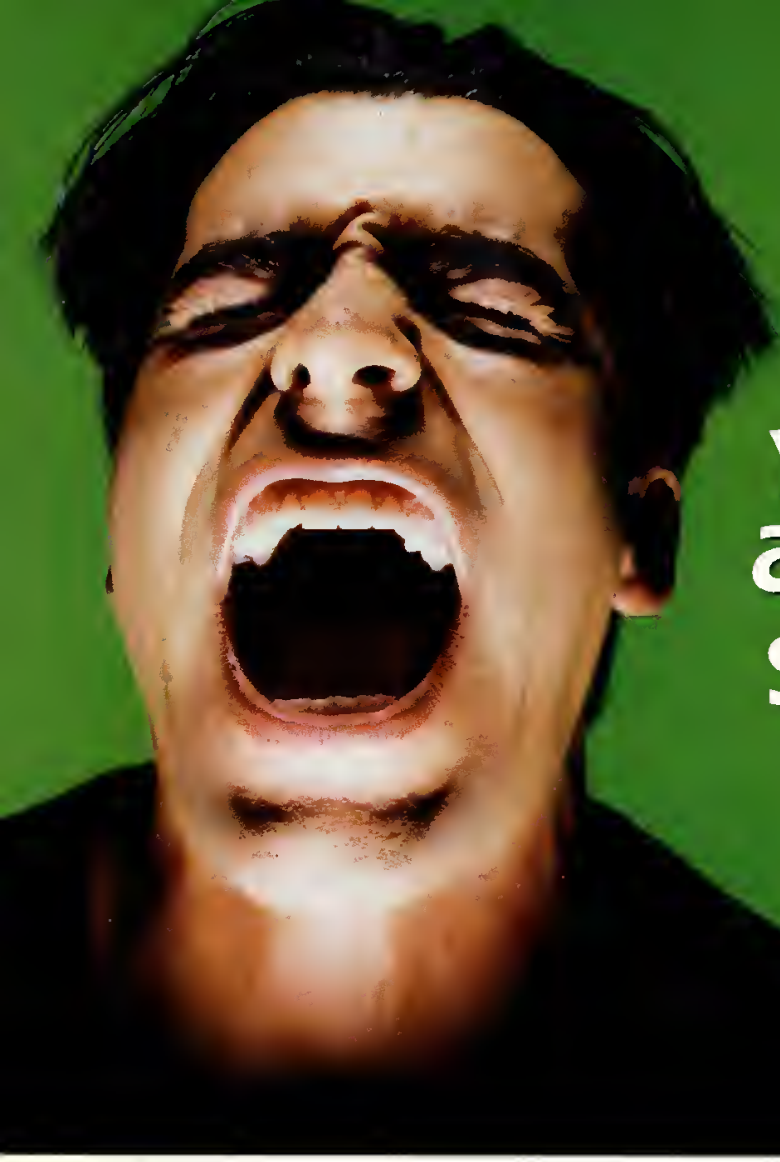

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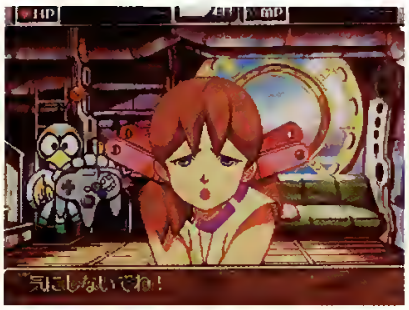
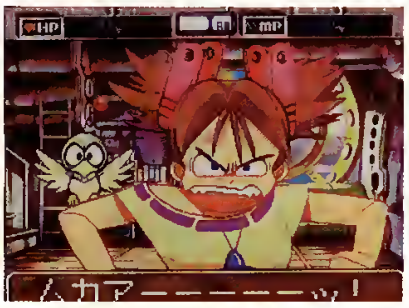
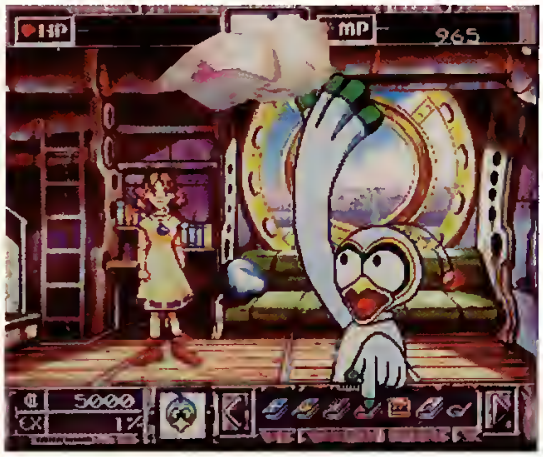
Wonder Project J2

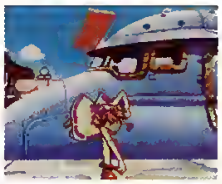
Enix brings a uniquely Japanese genre to the N64, but will it work (or even show up) in the states?

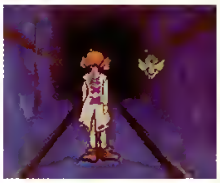






Animé style, bit-mapped graphics make-up Josette, her pet bird, and most of her immediate surroundings. Josette explains how to use the N64 controller (top left) and if she disagrees with choices made by the player, she shows a range of emotions from happy to enraged (middle and bottom left)





Josette throws the book at the player — because she doesn't know what it is. Will you tell her?

Format:	**Nintendo 64**
Publisher:	**Enix**
Developer:	**Giburo/Mint**
Release Date:	**Winter '97**
Origin:	**Japan**

From an omniscient viewpoint, the player either helps or hinders Josette

Several games in which the main character works independently from the player have been attempted (*Pac-Man 2*, *Galapagos*), but few have met with success in the U.S. But in Japan, everything from sim aquariums to high-school dating games have found their way to market.

Enter Enix's *Wonder Project J2*, a game in which the player works from an omniscient viewpoint and can either help or hinder the learning process of an android named Josette, a Pinocchio-like little girl who must save the world. Much like Mendel, the artificial life creature of Anark's *Galapagos*, Josette initially has zero knowledge of her environment, and the player must answer her questions, teaching her how to use tools and other objects. Josette also learns by trial and error and never forgets, so her behavior grows more complex the longer you play.

J2 isn't Enix's first foray into this style, as it expands upon the design of the original *Project J*, a Super Famicom title that never saw a U.S. release. While it's too early to tell if this game will find a U.S. publisher, it's reassuring to know that someone out there is taking unique new approaches to gaming within the budding N64 market.

With polygonal sequences in the minority, *J2* doesn't demand nearly as much processing power as other N64 titles like *Super Mario 64*

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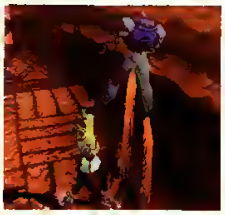
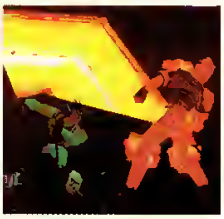
Toshinden 3

PlayStation's 3D fighting dynasty reaches its eagerly awaited third generation. Can it still compete?

Only Kayle and Eiji are on view so far. Each sports a polygonal makeover with enhanced detail (and surely animation). At press time, only these two can be confirmed, although the final roster may include Sonya, Mondo, and Fo

Takara's latest upgrade to the game that helped put the PlayStation on the map shows an ongoing commitment to graphic excellence, and the use of updated PlayStation graphics libraries





New tricks and new effects herald the third-generation *Toshinden*

Format: **PlayStation**
Publisher: **TBA**
Developer: **Takara**
Release Date: **1997**
Origin: **Japan**

Unlike Capcom (see *Street Fighter EX*), Takara has taken less than two years to go from the original *Battle Arena Toshinden* to the third installment in the series. The first *Toshinden* was a dynamic groundbreaker, but while *Toshinden 2* was an improvement, fighting fans had moved on to the rapid-fire execution that *Tekken 2* brought home. Now that *Toshinden 3* is in the works, Takara is looking to make its own enhancements.

The screenshots provided so far show new camera and lighting effects, putting the game's graphics on par with *Tekken 2*. The camera work has undergone some heavy tweaking as well: characters appear large when fighting close, and you're less likely to have a blocked camera, a problem that plagued the first two games. Lighting effects are also being dramatically improved, with light-sourcing from special moves now reflecting back onto the polygonal characters, bringing a refined look to their flaring bursts.

Mysteriously, little has been said about enhancements to the fighting. As 3D brawlers continue to evolve, *Toshinden 3* needs a more elaborate combo system to stay fresh among "me too" titles like *Iron & Blood*. And it really needs some new moves to keep an edge on hungry new contenders like *Tobal No. 1*. ng

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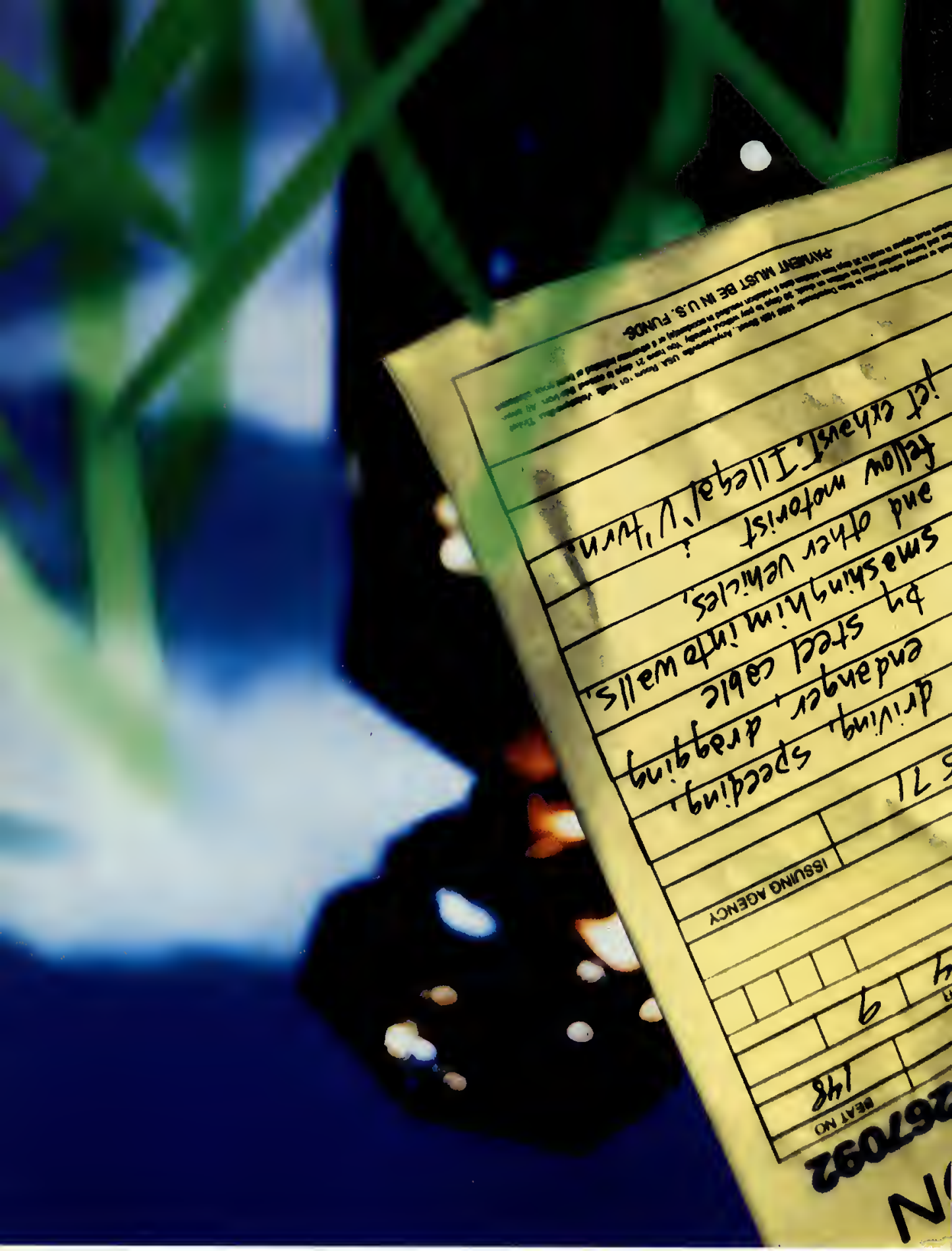

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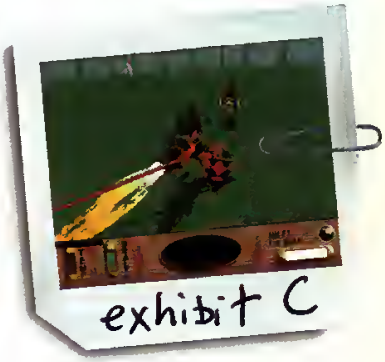
Suspect erects "clothesline" between two pylons, knocks oncoming driver off his vehicle, steals said vehicle, then runs over driver repeatedly with it. Claims he was participating in a "friendly" game of "Rocket War."

Suspect drives at speeds in excess of 100 mph over speed limit, cutting off other drivers, endangering drivers by running them into walls and pylons. On the street, this is known as "Rocket Racing."



Suspect, armed with large ball attached to cable, drives erratically, smashing ball into oncoming vehicles, hurling ball at other drivers in an attempt to score points during illegal, unsanctioned game of "Rocket Ball."

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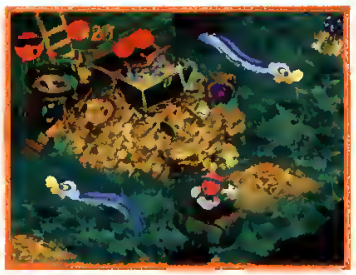

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Now Activision has an entry in the *C&C* style realtime wargame genre — but can *Dark Reign* really hope to, well, command and conquer?

Dark Reign

Format:	**PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**Activision**
Developer:	**Australis**
Release Date:	**January '97**
Origin:	**U.S.**

"Hostage Takers" brainwash enemy units into fanatical suicide bombers who attack the enemy HQ

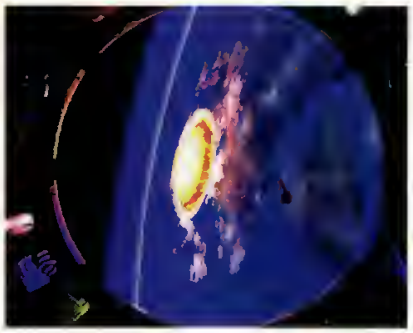
Since the release of *Command & Conquer*, it seems everyone and their proverbial cousin is getting into the wargame act. Activision is no exception, and offers almost unlimited variety as its creative contribution to the party.

With *Dark Reign*, Activision hopes to breathe some needed life into the genre by introducing a more varied range of unit types and giving them vastly different, and sometimes strange, abilities. Spy units, for example, can disguise themselves as enemy infantry, and when within range of enemy facilities, "report" on those facilities to enable the player to construct similar units. Scouts can morph and appear as part of the terrain, while "Hostage Takers" brainwash enemy units, turning them into fanatical suicide bombers who run back to the enemy HQ.

Many of the game's terrains include civilian structures and units, and these (depending on which side the player chooses) may have to be shielded from harm. In all, there are over fifty different unit and structure types.

The terrain also plays a role. *Dark Reign* features varying terrain height, and line of sight is computed realistically, so units on top of a cliff can't see units hugging the cliff wall below. But what is perhaps *Dark Reign*'s most exciting extra is the inclusion of the programmers's map editor. This map feature enables players to design their own maps and, in theory, ups the replay value immensely, as players can generate their own original missions.

Activision is to be commended for attempting such an ambitious expansion of an established genre. If everything fits together as planned, it could very well take the hill. ng



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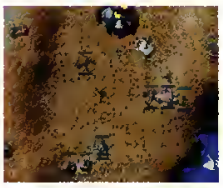

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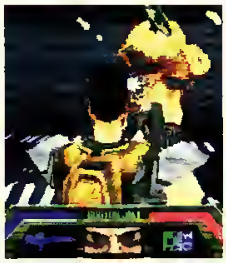
Broken Helix

Konami's latest first-person shooter takes a familiar genre into an increasingly familiar setting. But will any gameplay innovation join the trip to Area 51?

Quick FMA (Full Motion Animation) sequences punctuate sneppy dialogue between missions (left). The player must question a number of characters during the game, including this thinly veiled spoof of Schwarzenegger named "Block Dawg" (right). When angered, Jake refers to him as "Franken-kook"

Format:	**PlayStation**
Publisher:	**Konami**
Developer:	**KCEC**
Release Date:	**January '97**
Origin:	**U.S.**



An enemy meets a painful demise (top). "Don't wat your pants," Burton spouts while questioning a squeamish scientist (above)

On first look, *Broken Helix* appears to be merely next in the ever-growing list of 3D shooters. But while the game may not push any graphical barriers, it looks to make up for it with comical dialogue and some unique gameplay as the player assumes the role of wise crackin' Army bomb squad specialist, Jake Burton, sent to diffuse bombs inside the secret military base Area 51.

The early version of the game available at press time offers a 3D world sparsely populated by blocky characters. However, there's still plenty to be added, and Konami is fully aware that the engine needs tuning. However, many features already in *Broken Helix* don't need fixing.

In an inspired bit of casting, actor Bruce Campbell (*Army of Darkness, Evil Dead I* and *II*) provides the voice of Burton. As Burton, the player can toggle between two conversation modes: either a calm, inquisitive smart-ass or a threatening, razor-tongued, smart-ass.

There are interesting gameplay elements as well. Most 3D games have players running and gunning for their lives, but *Broken Helix* adds a "sneak" mode, enabling players to crawl to avoid security cameras and maneuver through tight spaces like air ducts.

Ultimately, *Broken Helix* may not sport much that's new, but it's already a bunch of fun. ng

The heads-up map makes navigation easy without missing any action

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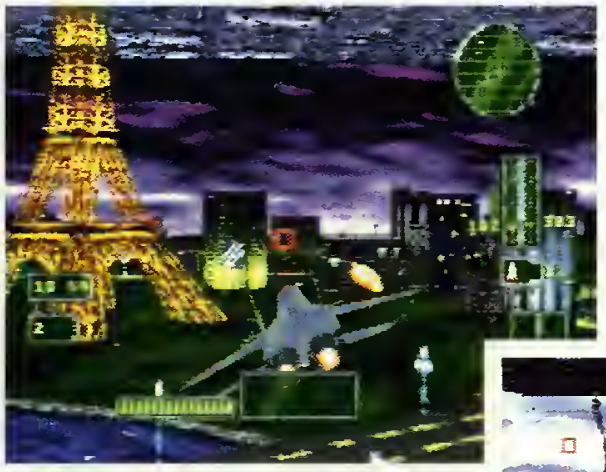
Independence Day

ID4 was a sci-fi success at the box office. But can Fox Interactive's game of the movie do the business?

Format:	**PlayStation, Saturn, PC**
Publisher:	**Fox Interactive**
Developer:	**Radical Entertainment**
Release Date:	**Spring '97**
Origin:	**Canada**



The action takes place in the skies over some of the most famous cities on Earth, as giant alien spacecraft hover overhead. The question remains though: shouldn't you hold off and just let them take France?

It was inevitable that when *Independence Day* became a big hit this summer, someone would jump on it. So now Fox Interactive invites players to take the role of the fighter pilot (loosely based on the Will Smith character) who leads the charge against the giant spacecraft hovering over the world's major cities. From either a cockpit or chase-view, players must complete several objectives before destroying alien ships over 13 levels, set around the world.

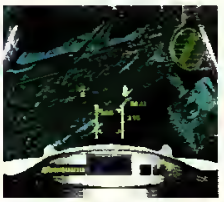
According to Fox Producer Michael Arkin, the game will have an "arcade feel," complete with power-ups like shields. The player flies eight different fighter planes, including an F-16, a MiG-31, and even an Alien fighter with which to attack the Mothership in the last stage.

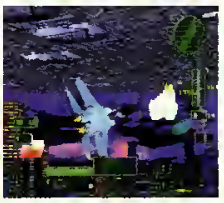
"It's the only game I know of where you'll have to fly between large buildings"

Michael Arkin Producer

Graphically, the world is completely 3D. Each city, the player's fighter, and all the enemy fighters are polygonally built. "Most first-generation, aerial combat games on PlayStation featured a few mountains, or maybe a flat-mapped city with a small cluster of polygonal buildings," says Arkin. "But our cities are more realistic. We've got real landmarks like the Sears Tower — you'll even have to fly between large buildings."

Fox Interactive's film-based games have had their ups and downs, with the miserable *Pagemaster* and the enjoyable *Die Hard Trilogy*. Hopefully *ID* will be more like the latter, because — personally speaking — after the Atari 2600 debacle, we're still waiting to kick E.T.'s ass.





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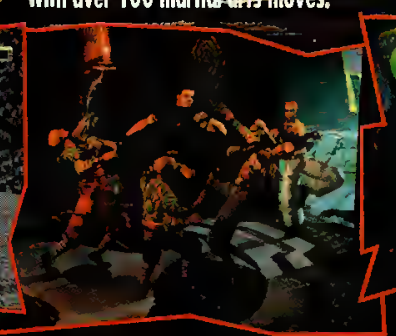

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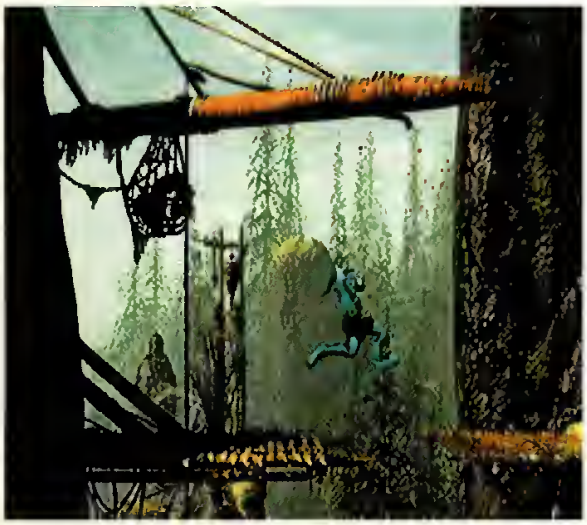
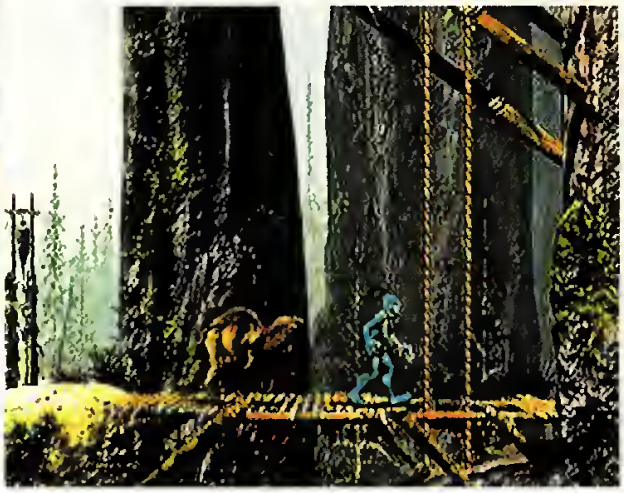
OddWorld Inhabitants:

Episode I

Even though it's not 3D, a new reworking of the *Flashback* genre may turn out to be an innovative 32-bit gaming experience





Add 32-bit power to the pre-rendered sprites and backgrounds of *Donkey Kong Country*, and you have an idea of how sharp *Episode I* looks and how smoothly the characters are animated. Abe (above) is followed by the Elum, a camel-like beast he rides (right)

Format:	**PlayStation, PC CD-ROM**
Publisher:	**GT Interactive**
Developer:	**OddWorld Inhabitants**
Release Date:	**Summer '97**
Origin:	**U.S.**

It was one of the most impressive console games shown behind closed doors at E3. It was reason alone to understand why over half of Acclaim's former Public Relations staff were now demoing products as employees of GT Interactive. It was initially called "*SoulStorm*," and if it lives up to half of its potential, PlayStation owners will spend next year asking, "Crash who?"

Oddworld Inhabitants was co-founded in 1994 by Lorne Lanning, President, and Sherry McKenna, C.E.O. Lanning's father was an engineer for Colecovision, quite possibly making him the first "second-generation" game developer. He and McKenna were both enjoying lucrative careers as special effects/computer animators, until Lanning convinced McKenna that the new 32-bit machines had the potential to take gameplay and graphics to new depths.

"Most important to us was creating new types of play mechanics with a conceptual story you get attached to," Lanning says. "Our minimal specs are the Saturn and PlayStation." And so work began on their first game, based on Lanning's five-part story set on an alien planet.

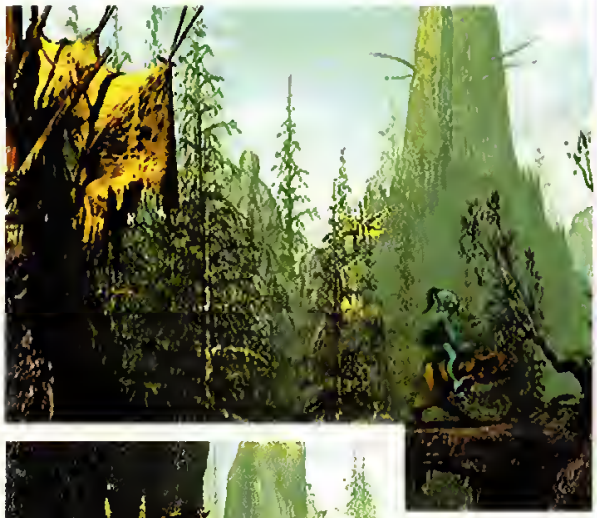
Episode I drops the player in an alien world in the role of Abe, a member of a slave-race who works in a meat-packing plant. Accidentally, Abe discovers his masters are using his race as foodstuff, and so his eight-level adventure begins.

The game's design is primarily side-scrolling frames similar to *FlashBack*, with 110 screens in the first level. But don't let the comparison mislead you. "The most important thing to us is

"Most important to us was creating new types of play mechanics with a conceptual story you get attached to"

Lorne Lanning, President

Founded in 1994, OddWorld Inhabitants is now a 25-person development house in San Luis Obispo, CA



One of the new features *Episode 1* will bring to the genre is the use of voices, sounds, and conversations

gameplay. There are a lot of situations in this game that are lifelike, and that's where it's very different," Lanning says. "You're going to have to understand the characters' personalities and behaviors, not just the deadly mechanics. Understanding the characters is how you're going to get farther along in the world."

The characters are extremely lifelike, as Abe can tip-toe by sleeping enemies, and he has a "chant" power that enables him to take possession of the mind's of enemy characters. The player's control then actually shifts from Abe to the enemy, and the player can use that enemy to destroy others.

Another new feature

Oddworld introduces is a language element Lanning calls "gamespeak," which he says is partially inspired by the audio puzzles of *Loom*, a classic LucasArts PC title. During the course of the game, the player learns to interact with other characters by giving or responding to voice cues. Using the directional pad, Abe can issue one of eight simple commands like "Wait Here" and "Follow Me."

It's hard to believe anything this innovative has been kept under wraps for so long, but as Lanning explains it, "There's a reason no one's read about *Oddworld* yet. We wanted to have something to show before we started talking, to prove what we're playing with is real."

Oddworld's experienced staff storyboarded the action in advance

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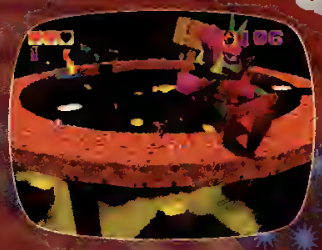

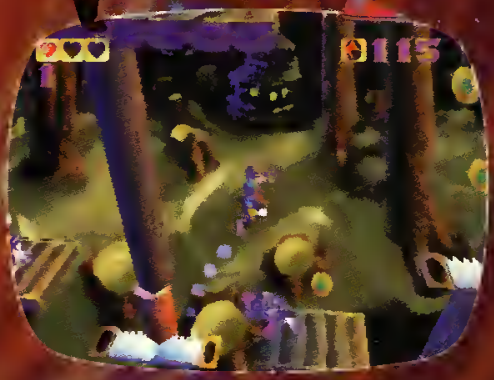

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Wayne Gretsky's 3D Hockey

Atari's arcade sister is finally showing its colors with *Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey*

***Gretsky's 3D Hockey* boasts a full roster of NHL teams and players, right down to updated stats and the correct numbers on the jerseys**

Format:	**Arcade**
Publisher:	**Atari Games**
Developer:	**Atari Games**
Release Date:	**December**
Origin:	**U.S.**

Looking at what Atari Games will bring into the arcades over the next year, one could honestly say the company is making a comeback. Considering the places it's been, and the changes it's seen (the most recent alteration was its acquisition by Williams-Bally/Midway from Time Warner Interactive) it's relatively surprising that a small band of staffers have done this well with the few products they've released and the mediocre support they've received from what was Time Warner.

Take, for example, *Primal Rage*. Although only a three-star game in our book, and less and less interesting as it made its way to other formats, the game was a huge commercial success, and the cornerstone title for the company as it began evolving into a smart, cool game maker with its finger on (or at least near) the pulse of the arcade audience. Following *Primal Rage* was *Hoop It Up*, a simple, enthralling basketball redemption game. Then came *Area 51*, the surprise arcade hit of the year, and now a PC port and soon to be released on PlayStation. *Area 51* was such a big hit that it all but stole the spotlight from Sega's *Virtua Cop II*, which appeared in the arcades at relatively the same time. *Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey*, due in the arcades as we go to press, will be followed by at least three new promising games, and the 3D hockey game will see a near-simultaneous release with a slightly modified home version on Nintendo 64.

"We used Wayne as our model for skating movement, videotaping his motions from several different viewpoints"

Robert Daly Producer

The four-player hockey game offers much of the cartoonish

The action is fast and has a real hockey feel — even more impressive for providing both an arcade mode and a more demanding simulation mode

ng alphas

While playing in the arcade mode, the puck leaves a nice streak for the players to follow, reminiscent of the Fox Track — very slick

feel popular with many other Midway games: flaming pucks, big-headed players, hidden characters, and swiss cheese goalies, to name a few. But this signifies Atari's learning curve in making successful arcade games (in the last two years) as much as it shows Midway's influences. But what separates this game from, say, Midway's own *Open Ice Hockey*, is its attempt at being a solid simulation as well as a good arcade game. In fact, *Gretzky* actually has four modes of play: Player-selectable Mode (best for tournaments), Simulation (which features lower scoring and tougher defense), Pro-sim (a mix of the two), and Two-on-Two Mode. This strategy could prove valuable for Atari because, like soccer, hockey is at best a demographically regional game, and offering the sim and arcade modes should give the game more than a fighting chance at pleasing hockey fans of every stripe. Add to this list both NHL and NHLPA licenses, all 26 NHL teams, and 260 of the best players, and things start adding up.

It's unusual, however, for games to sit on the sim-arcade fence and be any good at all, but there's some proof in the pudding here. Next Generation editors played the game at AMOA (Amusement and Music Operators' Association) and the N64 version in the offices and were greatly impressed at the game's playability. Two levels of cup play (the Stanley Cup and the Van Elderan Cup — named after the company's president) and a total of 59 opponents are almost sure to provide gamers with long-term appeal. In addition to standard moves such as passing, shooting, and scoring, players can check, trip, perform diving blocks, and certainly the best part of any hockey game, they can fight with grab punches and uppercuts.

Visually, much attention has been paid to detail. Producer Robert Daly explains, "We used Wayne as our model for skating movements, videotaping his motions from several different viewpoints. In the lab, we built a 3D model that we animated to follow his skating exactly. So, even though the players are made up of thousands of textured polygons, they move very fluidly." Built around 3Dfx's Voodoo Graphics chipset, the game engine theoretically can handle real-time frame rates upward of one million texture-mapped triangles per second. Even in the early version we saw, the result is very smooth, seamless character animation and quick-reacting players.

Finally, with 42 hidden characters and personalized input codes (so players can check their standings and statistics), Atari Games has done its homework and done it well. Hockey fans may be in for a real hat trick, and Atari Games may be back in the zone.

"Even though the players are made up of thousands of polygons, they move very fluidly"

Robert Daly Producer

Checks, shots, even fights — it's in there

Atari Games is the only surviving remnant of the once proud Atari label. It is somewhat ironic in that it was the division sold off years ago as an unprofitable venture (see page 97)

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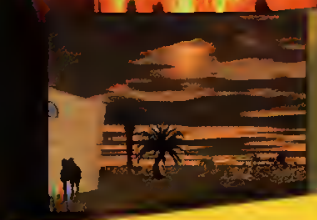

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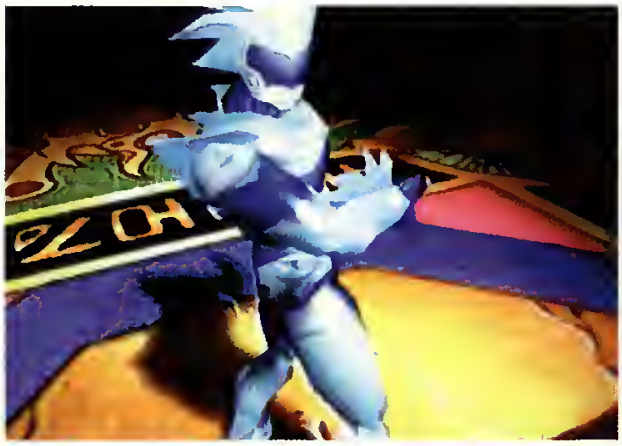
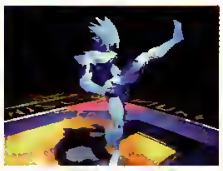
Dual Heroes

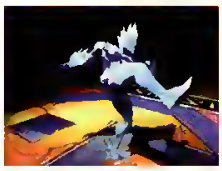
It's the first announced 3D fighting game for Nintendo 64, but don't hold your breath — it's a long way off



Given that the N64 is such a 3D powerhouse, one would think there would be dozens of 3D fighting games — so why is *Dual Heroes* the only one?

No, it's not a Power Ranger, it's Gai, one of the game's two existing characters





Dual Heroes is so far from completion, even we don't know what these moves signify

Players can expect different fighting strategies, depending on which virtual opponent the player chooses

Format: **Nintendo 64**
Publisher: **Hudson Soft**
Developer: **Hudson Soft**
Release Date: **TBA (Japan)**
Origin: **Japan**

While *Killer Instinct* and *Mortal Kombat Trilogy* have come to Nintendo 64, they seem a sad waste of the system's much vaunted polygon power. Indeed, they beg the question: where are all the N64 3D fighting games?

Well, we found one — *Dual Heroes*, in development at Hudson Soft in Japan. The game is still very early in its production cycle (estimates place the game at 15% to 20% complete), with only two fighters in place: Gai, in red, and Zen, in blue. Eventually the game is planned for a total of eight characters; however, this belies the game's most innovative feature, the "virtual gamer."

Instead of merely providing a single AI for each computer-controlled fighter, the designers at Hudson Soft, led by producer Keta Hamamiya, have opted to invent several AI opponents to "control" the characters during a one-player game. If all goes according to the plans of the design team, the experience will be closer to competing against human players on a linked cabinet than competing against a CPU. Through this method, the player can expect several different levels of challenge and fighting strategies from each character, depending on which virtual opponent the player chooses to fight against. This would set the game apart from most fighting games, in which each character has one set of strengths and weaknesses.

Due out by spring or early summer of '97, *Dual Heroes* could make its mark by simply being the first 3D brawler for the system (although an N64 version of Williams's *War Gods* is rumored to be in the works). However, it's clear the designers have opted to not simply release any old product, but push the technical envelope as well. ng

Than again, poor old Gai looks like he's pining for a morphing mutant to pick on

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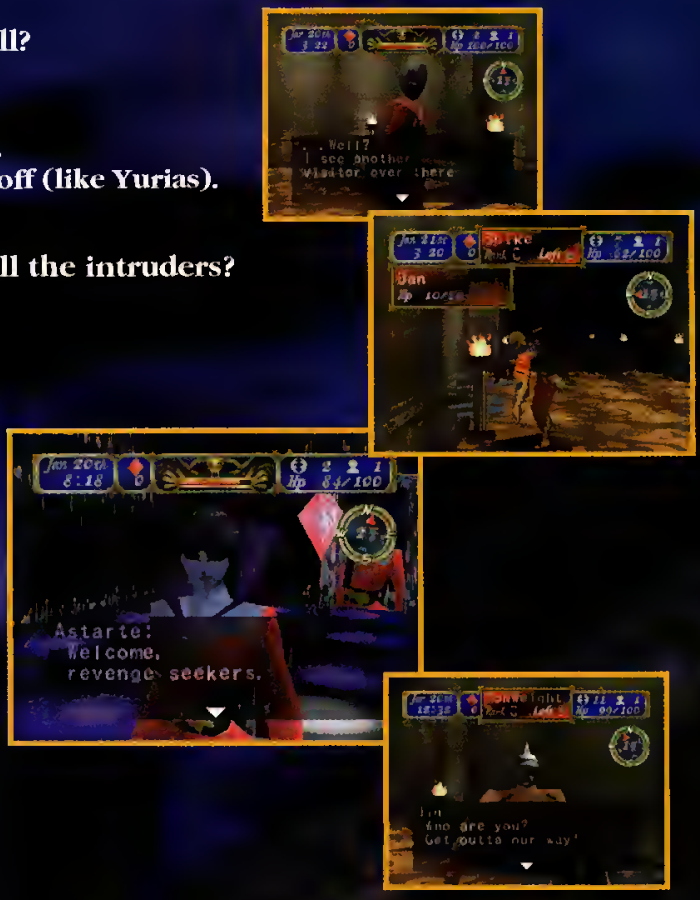
1. Who are you going to trap and kill?
   a) All of the intruders.
   b) Some of the intruders.
   c) Just the intruders you don't like.
   d) Just the intruders who piss you off (like Yurias).
   e) Most of the above.

2. How are you going to trap and kill the intruders?
   a) Spike them from the wall.
   b) Crush them with the Stomp.
   c) Zap them with the Volt Cage.
   d) Use Mind Kill.
   e) Most of the above.

3. What are you seeking?
   a) Revenge.
   b) Vengeance.
   c) Redemption.
   d) Acquittal.
   e) All of the above.

3. Are you really...
   a) A good guy.
   b) A bad guy.
   c) A victim of circumstance.
   d) A wimp.
   e) All of the above.



For the answers see the Temco Super Bowl ad in this same magazine.

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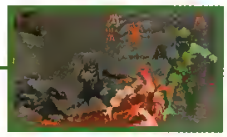

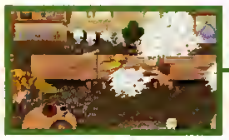

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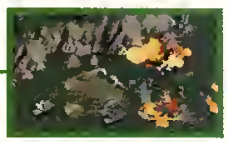

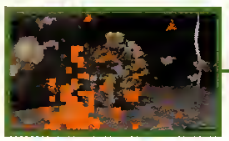

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See how some typical TEN members use the service

Welcome to the World of Online Gaming

There's more and more talk lately about multiplayer gaming. So what's the big deal? Well, just ask anyone who's ever actually played a multiplayer game, and they'll tell you. Playing a human opponent adds a whole new level to gaming. Instead of computer AI, — which, let's face it most of us can learn to defeat in a few hours, human opponents are always unpredictable — learning our tricks, developing a few of their own, or just doing capricious things. The bottom line is that human opponents keep games interesting. And of course, it's more satisfying to blow away a friend in a game than to kill a computer-controlled sprite!

In fact, most of the hottest PC games over the past few years — from *Doom* to *Duke Nukem 3D* and *QUAKE*— have had a multiplayer component. That's what keeps the games fresh and keeps us playing. Great. Multiplayer gaming is excellent and it's here to stay. So what's the problem?

The problem is that most gamers don't have access to any-place to actually play multiplayer games. To play most multi-player games, you need access to a Local Area Network, or LAN. Of course, there aren't that many houses that have LANs in them. So most people have to play at school (where bring-ing anything so foreign as a game into the lab is usually frowned upon), or work, where playing games is generally filed under "career limiting actions."

Actually, work is where most multiplayer games end up being played. In fact, it's been theorized by some computer industry insiders that many employees artificially inflate their sys-tem requirements and needs simply to get a Pentium powerful enough to play *Duke* and other multiplayer games. But few peo-ple really want to play games at work. Despite the convenient excuse of "working late" to a long-suffering spouse after a marathon *Command and Conquer* session, most of us would

rather play games where we're comfortable — at home.

Enter the Internet. Although some games have long had modem play options, the Internet now offers the ability to play the hottest and fastest multiplayer games online, against people from all over the country.

The Total Entertainment Network, or TEN, the premiere online gaming service, has ended its rigorous beta-testing process and is open to the public. Over the next 13 pages, we'll show exactly what TEN offers in terms of features, exclu-sive games, and other content. We'll also show how TEN is solving the technological problems that stand in the way of online, multiplayer gaming, and give you step-by-step instruc-tions on how to log on. You may encounter some terms you're unfamiliar with when reading this supplement. That's why, start-ing on page 10, we've provided a glossary of terms.

Online, multiplayer gaming offers a depth of experience that can be found nowhere else. It's going to take you places and offer play experiences you've never had before. So read on, then get ready to log on and have the time of your life.

TEN. It's the future of gaming.

id's mega follow-up to *Doom* will be on TEN, of course.

One of the all-time greats, Westwood's *Command & Conquer* requires fast thinking and creative strategy.

Why TEN?

Online, multiplayer gaming is clearly the future of the PC game world. The question is, how do you choose which service to go with? After all, they all promise the ability to play games with others over the Internet. In the end it comes down to two things: features and experience.

Experience

Experience? Isn't this a new field? How could anyone possibly have experience in the world of online, multiplayer gaming? TEN does. Daniel Goldman, chairman of the Total Entertainment Network, has been programming computers for 23 years — since he was seven years old. "I made games on the Commodore PET, HP Calculators, old teletype machines — everything." But lots of people have game experience. What we're talking about is online, multiplayer games. "For us, the online portion started in 1983, on the Apple II. We wrote our own BBS, started working on online games and it just progressed from there." This was Planet Optigon, a multiplayer games BBS and the direct predecessor, along with the Mac-based Outland, of the Total Entertainment Network.

Along the way, Goldman and the rest of the TEN team learned what worked, and what didn't. "We looked at the different psychological archetypes that exist, and how you get people really engaged in something and give them a lot of control. Finally, we realized that you need an entire service in order to technologically really support a compelling gaming experience, because the other online services, AOL, Prodigy, and CompuServe just are not set up to deal with realtime games."

And that was the genesis of TEN as an independent online gaming service. What it means to gamers is that the entire effort of the TEN staff is devoted solely to games. "If you're AOL or Microsoft, games are one thing you do," says Goldman. "But for us, creating the service is the most important thing. The entire service, from the editorial, to the technology, to the front end is geared toward creating an exciting place for gamers to hang out and have fun." That kind of dedication has led the TEN team to come up with an unbeatable feature set for TEN.

Before you start playing a game, there is plenty of time to chat and find the perfect victims — er... — opponents.

What do I need to use TEN?

Here's a rundown on the requirements for the service itself — some games may (and most do) have higher system requirements. Don't worry, Mr. Bandwidth will let you know if your system is too weak to play a game.

EQUIPMENT	MINIMUM	RECOMMENDED
System	486/66DX2	Pentium 90 or better
OS	Windows 95	Windows 95
RAM	8 MB	16 MB
Modem	14.4 kbaud	28.8 kboud
CD-ROM	2x	2x

Features

The important thing to remember about the TEN feature set is that it has been devised by gamers for gamers. All the issues that other gaming services are just starting to encounter were found

Accolade's empire building masterpiece, *Deadlock* offers a high level of graphic and strategic sophistication.

One of the most popular PC games in years, *Duke Nukem 3D* from 3D Realms has action fans in a frenzy on TEN.

— and solved — by the Planet Optigon and Outland teams years ago. That means that "out of the box," TEN will offer a far more compelling experience to both hardcore and casual gamers alike.

One feature that separates TEN from the pack is the company's policy of obtaining exclusive rights to hot games. On the one hand, this makes sense in a business sense for TEN, but it offers gamers a big advantage, too. Not only will you know exactly where to find other fans of the game, but incorporated into the interface of TEN-exclusive titles will be a way to seamlessly log onto the TEN service. And if you're not currently a subscriber, you'll even be able to join, since the TEN software will be included on the CD. In fact, if you bought the full retail version of *Duke Nukem 3D*, you've already experienced this, since the TEN software is included on the CD. By offering exclusive titles, TEN also ensures full cooperation of the publisher, meaning that not only will many TEN exclusive titles be optimized to work even better with the service, TEN will be able to offer more complete support material surrounding the game.

That's another TEN feature. When you join TEN you don't simply log on, play games, and log off (although, of course, if that's your style, you can). There is an entire web area devoted to providing support material for each game, in the form of innovative "Dataspheres." Here, you can find tips and tricks for playing, download software patches, shareware, and demos, communicate with other gamers, and more. It really is a one-stop shopping for fans of a game. Soon, TEN will also support newsgroups for discussion of TEN issues.

What if you don't have web access, or even Internet access at all? Does that mean you can't access TEN? Not at all. TEN, through an agreement with Concentric Network Corporation, a nationwide ISP, provides nationwide dial-up numbers for the service. Using these dial-ups gives you full access to the World Wide Web.

The TEN dial-ups do more than just give you access to the service and the Web, though. They are also a way for you to guarantee a fast, reliable, connection to the service. Although you can sign on using any ISP, by using the TEN dial-up, you can ensure that you are using a direct path to the service, and guarantee a low-latency situation when connected. Even gamers with their own ISPs may want to try using a dial-up line if their service is not delivering the speed they require for fast-

When you first log on, you can see a list of games, as well as posts on the latest games.

How do I connect?

TEN is fully integrated with the Internet. So, if you have a SLIP or PPP Internet connection, you're in business. If you don't, or if you find that your Internet service provider (ISP) can't give you a fast enough connection time, TEN has dial-up numbers available nationwide. There is an hourly surcharge for using the TEN dial-ups. If you buy a game that supports TEN, and you don't have an Internet connection, you're in luck, because, from the game CD, you'll be able to sign onto the Net using Concentric, a nationwide ISP that works extremely well with TEN.

The brutal racing action of SSI's *Necrodome* brings fast-paced 3D gaming to TEN.

One of the best war games ever, SSI's *Panzer General Online* is a must for all fans of the genre.

Daniel Goldman, chairman of TEN, has years of experience in online gaming.

action games. How can you tell? At unique character on TEN, Mr. Bandwidth, monitors your connection, telling you what your connect speed is, and rating the different arenas where you play based upon the speed you'll get inside each one.

The TEN service is divided first by game, then by Zone (zones are loosely geographic, although there is special zone for people who are using a dial-up connection), and finally by arena. The arenas are where you chat with other gamers and join games. Arenas are set up for users of different abilities. And if you're doubtful, you can check other players' stats before you begin (stats are only active for *Duke Nukem*, *Command & Conquer* and *QUAKE* now, but they'll eventually be in place for all games). To ensure newbies don't get slaughtered, there's no stat boost for killing a player with far worse stats than you.

One nice thing about the chat rooms is that they contain some of the best conversation partners on the Web. Why? Part of it is TEN's rigorously enforced 18-plus only policy. "We don't want kids on the service," says Daniel Goldman. "I don't want to spend the one hour I have to play each evening with a bunch of kids. I don't want to get my butt kicked by a bunch of kids, either! [laughs] It was a decision we made a long time ago, and we revisit occasionally, but we feel strongly that we're going to build the best community by making TEN 18-plus."

Community. That's the feature that will really make TEN stand out. When you play on TEN, you will not be playing against an anonymous "STOAT3492," but a real person, with stats and personal information that you can see, and who you can talk to and interact with in a real way. TEN is dedicated to building this community, and, importantly, sub-communities within the service. "You can't just have a million people intimately hanging out with each other," says Goldman.

One of the first areas this will be seen is around the *Dark Suns* RPG. A free web area, The Havens, will exist around the game, and within that area will be special web-sites for specific clubs and guilds. There may be a Thieves' Guild, where thieves, and thieves only, could go to chat about techniques. Another Guild or club may be open to all — say one that promotes a specific religion or political view in the game.

Over time, TEN will continue to grow. What's most exciting about this is that there is a mandate at TEN to make sure members have as much of a hand in its growth as anyone else. There's no question about it. TEN has the experience that a service like this needs and the features that gamers want. If you want to play online multiplayer games, you want to play on the Total Entertainment Network.

Oh yeah, it's Westwood Studio's follow-up to *Command & Conquer*, and it's available on TEN.

TEN Tips

1. **Check out the DataSpheres for well-rounded information on TEN games.**
2. **Holding down the CTRL key while you click on the "Create" or "Join" buttons will help you browse for that elusive .exe file and drag it out into the light of day.**
3. **Right-click on names in the Who's Here list for a mini-menu of options: Profiles, Rankings, Muzzle and Latency.**
4. **Before quitting out of games on TEN, let others know you are leaving via the game chat. It's good gaming etiquette.**
5. **14.4 modems handle latency just as well as 28.8 modems for high-speed games.**
6. **If you don't want to wait for all the players in your *Duke Nukem 3D* game, press the L key during game launch. They'll catch up later.**
7. **A program that disables the Windows 95 key (talk about easy targets) is available through the TEN support area. This key can crash (end) a game when it is struck accidently.**
8. **Check out our support area jam-packed with goodies like game files, customer service, and billing. (Well, WE think of billing as a "goody.")**

Smashing Technical Hurdles

Launching a nationwide, Internet-based, multiplayer gaming service is not a trivial matter, there are awesome technical hurdles that must be overcome, both on the network and in the back office. Dave King, co-founder and chief technical officer of TEN, outlined some of them, "delivering low latency, being able to scale to handle demand so performance doesn't degredate, being able to monitor the entire network, reliability, being able to bring new titles to the network." Here's how TEN has managed to solve the problems in the way of excellent gaming over the Internet.

Low Latency

"Our game servers are right on the Internet backbone, right off the routers, so we minimize the hop count," says King. This means that when a signal goes from your computer, to TEN and back again it doesn't have to travel very far, which keeps lag-time low. Also, by signing key deals with providers, notably Concentric, TEN has managed to create what King calls a "carpool lane," on the Information Superhighway. What that means is that when you use Concentric to connect to TEN, either because Concentric is your normal ISP, or because you are using a TEN dial-up, the signals are guaranteed to be routed ahead of other Internet traffic in times of congestion, delivering true, low-latency performance for fast-action games like *QUAKE*.

Scalability

Unlike some online gaming solutions, TEN is designed so many thousands of users can be on at the same time, with no performance degradation. That's because TEN uses distributed, modular mini-computers, working in parallel, as servers, which can be added easily, unlike some services that use difficult-to-upgrade mainframes.

Network Monitoring

Using special proprietary technology, TEN can constantly monitor network performance, which the user sees through the actions of Mr. Bandwidth. This way, users will know, before a game, what kind of performance they can expect, and can plan accordingly.

Reliability

With servers spread across the entire Internet, TEN is more reliable than most services you'll find on the Internet. And, the company's main server connection has a redundant, fault-tolerant connection equivalent to more than 200 T1 lines — and that's just to do back-end stuff, not to do actual game serving.

The System Architecture

When new games come to TEN, it's because TEN provides a special API enabling developers to specialize their games to take advantage of TEN's features easily. Designing multiplayer games strictly for LAN play is one thing, but on the Net, things get complicated, and many LAN development standards (like making everyone's games run as slow as the slowest user's) just don't work. That's why TEN provides a high level of technical support for developers looking to create Internet-savvy, multiplayer versions of their games.

The bottom line is this: If you want to play on a service that has already solved the technical problems, and is ready to deliver seamless action nationwide, you want to play on TEN.

The Gaming Glossary

API — Application Program Interface. An API is a group of libraries developers use to easily conform to certain standards.

ARENA — Inside each zone are multiple arenas, which you enter to chat with other players and start games. The arenas are generally organized by skill level, so you can quickly determine where you should go to play other people of your level, or with your interests.

BANDWIDTH — A measure of the amount of data that can be transferred at one time. High bandwidth is better than low bandwidth.

BAUD — a measure of the bandwidth of a modem, baud is a measure of symbols transferred per second.

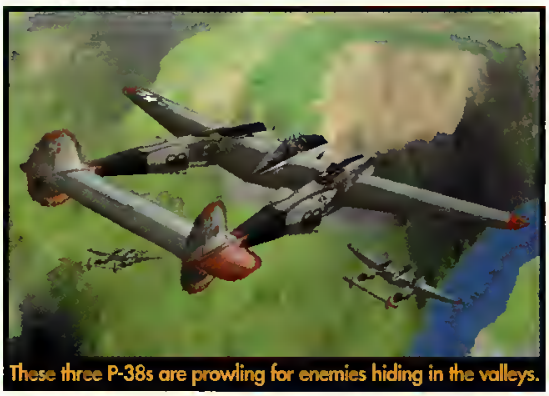
BBS — Bulletin Board System, a private dial-up service, similar to America Online or CompuServe, but generally run by one person or a small group and with a more targeted audience than a major online service. Many BBS's are run

Confirmed Kill

Publisher: **Eidos**

Built from the ground up to be the ultimate in online flight simulations, *Confirmed Kill* does not follow the traditional formulas of the genre. Instead, the game was designed to address the specific needs of the online gamer. In researching the game, the developers at Eidos took a close look at the online flight sims that existed prior to *Confirmed Kill*, and found considerable room for improvement. One area in which they felt there was room for significant enhancements was the line speed of the carrier. Though online flight sim fans have grown accustomed to unpredictable performance standards due to overwhelming demands on the services which provide the games, the team that worked on *Confirmed Kill* would not tolerate such standards and therefore chose to develop the game exclusively for TEN. With its high speed solutions to traditional latency problems, TEN was the only available logical choice for the kind of game they wanted to make. Another area in which the developers saw a need for a change was in leveling the playing field to make it fair for players no matter when they joined the game. Finally, the team thought it was important to take advantage of today's hottest technology including 3D graphics cards and a brand system for creating ultra-realistic terrains.

According to game producer and Gulf War combat pilot Bryan Walker, the decision to go with TEN was an easy one because of the service's size and line quality. "With six degrees of flight freedom and huge terrains, flight sims are big bandwidth hogs," he suggests. Most importantly, using TEN's high-speed game servers significantly reduces the problem of "warping." It's this fact that led Eidos to rethink the model on which to build *Confirmed Kill*. With many companies creating games for the retail market with an "Internet play" option tacked on, Eidos thought it could do better if it focused solely on the online aspect, and with the technology offered by TEN, it's created a quantum leap for flight sim fans.



These three P-38s are prowling for enemies hiding in the valleys.

This Soviet La-7 is "meat on the table" for a German Fw-190.

No stranger to the problems of online flight simulations, Walker said "there is nothing more aggravating to an A-type personality than the problems current online flight sim fans must endure because of poor line quality." It was in proclaiming these conditions unacceptable for *Confirmed Kill* that Walker and his team chose not only to rethink many of the things they were doing in the development of the game, but to search out a carrier that could truly handle the demands of its players. It was also important, after all, to not only solve the problems of current online flight sims, but to take the genre to the next level in the process. And, with more than 150 person hours of high-end military simulation expertise, the team is certain they have achieved this goal in dramatic fashion.

GLOSSARY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

out of homes and many can accommodate only one caller at a time.

BIT — the smallest discrete amount of information a computer can process, a bit is generally represented by a one or a zero.

ISP — Internet Service Provider. This is a company that allows you to access the Internet, generally via a modem.

KBPS — a measure of the speed at which a modem transfers, in thousands of bits per second. A 28.8 kbps modem is twice as fast as a 14.4 kbps modem.

LATENCY — Functionally, latency is the time it takes for a signal to leave a computer, travel to a distant computer, and return.

CONTINUED ON PAGE

A worthy opponent, the Zero battles it out with some Hellcats.

Another problem familiar to most online flight sim fans is that of jumping into a game and immediately finding yourself at a huge disadvantage simply for being new to the game. This occurs because, traditionally, players who have been in a particular game for perhaps a few hours end up simply lying in wait for new players to join the game. Of course, this being the case, the new player finds himself a target as soon as they log on. Or, perhaps a player signs on to a game on the side of a team just shy of complete destruction by players involved in a campaign for hours previous to the player even getting in the game. According to Walker, "It's like being punished for eating dinner while others are playing the game."

Confirmed Kill's detailed graphics help to portray the realistic look of classic fighters like this North American P-51D.

In an effort to right these traditional shortcomings of the online flight sim formula, Eidos decided to focus more on the dog fight than the major campaign-style gaming. In doing so, each player can not only jump into the game at any point on an even playing field with others, but can also be assured that he will not have to search the skies for hours for a fight. In an effort to enhance this sense of personal attention the game's designer's have implemented a unique Briefing Room feature which allows the player to fully coordinate his/her strategies.

In the end, Eidos, in cooperation with TEN, have set out to establish a new kind of online flight simulation entertainment, not only solving many of the problems of the past but surpassing the expectations of the genre's biggest supporters.

GLOSSARY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

MR. BANDWIDTH — This TEN character tests your Internet connection at all times, and lets you know which zones are acceptable for gameplay. He also will let you know if your computer is up to snuff to play a particular type of game, and he'll kill applications that negatively affect gameplay.

MUZZLE — If you are chatting with someone on TEN who is super annoying, you can "muzzle" them. They can keep typing, but you won't see what they say.

OC3 — The equivalent of 84 T1s, an OC3 transfers data at 155 million bits per second.

PACKET — Information is sent across the Internet in discrete quantities, called packets. Each packet has header and footer data that identifies, transmission type (e.g. ethernet/LocalTalk/ATM/ISDN), protocal (e.g., TCP/IP, HTTP, AppleTalk, IPX), and quantity of data.

PACKET LOSS — Sometimes networks "lose" packets due to noisy transmission lines, or hardware problems. Packet loss can great increase latency.

PROFILE — Each user on TEN creates a profile, which contains all

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

Shadow Warrior

Publisher: **3D Realms**

When the developer's goal is to create a 3D shooter with environments even more interactive than *Duke Nukem 3D*, it's safe to say that the project is an extremely ambitious one. Exclusive to TEN, *Shadow Warrior* is 3D Realms' follow-up title to the incredible *Duke Nukem 3D* and uses the same amazing 'Build' engine. Featuring significant technological innovations, *Shadow Warrior* allows for true 3D building techniques which means that the game can actually support a more realistic and interactive "room-over-room" architecture. In the actual gameplay design *Shadow Warrior* maintains much of the core focus found in *Duke*, but the development team wanted to make sure it went beyond its previous projects. In working to achieve this goal, the team dug deeper than simply changing the graphics and actually reworked the gameplay model. Designed to take the genre to its very limits, *Shadow Warrior* requires at least a P60 to play, and this, combined with TEN's superior line quality ensures a cutting-edge gaming experience.

If it's gore ya want...

As the perfect demonstration of the game's 3D technology, *Shadow Warrior* offers the ability to commandeer a bulldozer and plow through any of the game's walls into the next room. It's this kind of "sector" building approach that enabled developers the freedom to implement such things as morphing environments, 3D tornado effects, and a spectacular amoeba sector. The real success from this kind of design, however, comes from being able to include complex 3D items available for actual use, such as forklifts and cranes.

What's probably more in the tradition of *Duke Nukem 3D* is the core factor. Taking this element to a new level in *Shadow Warrior*, 3D Realms was again eager to approach the subject with a tongue-in-cheek attitude. It's difficult, after all, to take what can only be described as "a vomiting head" very seriously. Put into the game as a way for players to maintain involvement in a multiplayer game after taking a fatal blow,

Shadow Warrior's Ninja theme makes it stand out.

dead gamers are reduced to nothing more than a head, which can do only two things — rotate and spew deadly vomit.

In the end, 3D Realms has created a game that is different enough from its previous work and to possibly even go beyond. Of course, *Duke* will always have its fans, but with unique features like being able to drive a tank or use a grenade launcher that fires bouncing grenades, 3D Realms and TEN hope *Shadow Warrior* will attract its own fans. Designed for high-end PCs, the game won't work on a 486, but with the right hardware, the game is an intense online experience.

GLOSSARY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

their stats for various games, and may contain a portrait and other information about the user.

PROTOCOL — networks need packets of information to be formatted to a certain type to be able to understand them; the different types are called Protocols.

T1 — A high speed, direct Internet connection, a T1 goes 200 times as fast as a 28.8 modem.

T3 — A high speed, direct Internet connection. A T3 is made up of 28 T1s.

TCP/IP — Terminal Connect Protocol/Internet Protocol. All the information sent over the Internet uses the TCP/IP protocol.

WHISPER — You can send private messages while chatting on TEN, by choosing a specific user and the using the whisper command.

ZONE — The areas in which you can play on TEN are divided into three main zones (more zones may eventually go online). You choose zones from the same screen where you choose arenas. The Abyss will give the best results for users on the East Coast, Pandemonium will work the best for those in the west and Valhalla is for those who are connecting using a direct TEN dial-up.

AD&D Dark Sun: Crimson Sands

Publisher: **SSI**

The tag-line boasts, "It's not a nice place to visit. And you wouldn't live here long." The only problem is that there are more than one thousand people practically living there already. *AD&D Dark Sun: Crimson Sands* is an original and exclusive chapter in SSI's AD&D computer game series found only on TEN. Wholly unique, *Dark Sun: Crimson Sands* is the first game of its kind to offer a persistant environment accessible to any and all TEN users. What this means is that the game literally gets bigger every day with new players and scenarios. Considering the traditional depth, colorful characters, and never-ending adventure found in SSI's AD&D games, *Dark Sun: Crimson Sands* is in many ways the perfect opportunity to exploit the technological advantages of a service like TEN. After all, if there are any real shortcomings to the AD&D fantasy RPGs of the past, it's that the worlds always had limits. Creating a game such as *Dark Sun: Crimson Sands* also enables players to experience a true variety of playing styles, thus making the game that much more like real life. With new characters interacting with the world each day, *Dark Sun: Crimson Sands* is constantly reinventing itself. Finally what will help make *Dark Sun: Crimson Sands* a true landmark success is TEN's overall commitment to the project.

RPGs always translate well to the 'Net' and *Dark Sun* is no exception.

One of the major goals of TEN has always been to offer totally unique games and experiences to the user and *Dark Sun: Crimson Sands* fits the bill like nothing else. An experiment in online gaming, *Dark Sun: Crimson Sands* is able to bring its apocalyptic world of bizarre and deadly creatures to a virtually unlimited amount of users because of TEN's exceptional technology and service. In providing a game for fans of traditional RPGs in which new players may join a world with an actual history and future, SSI and TEN have created more than just a temporary escape for AD&D fans. They have, in fact, created a whole new community of people and a way for them to interact with each other in an environment that provides an immense amount of adventuring potential. And, as fans of the AD&D series would probably have predicted, this kind of opportunity has stirred up quite a bit of excitement among those familiar with the series.

This altar shows off the detail of the game's art.

Multiplayer interaction is the key to *Dark Sun*.

With the number of players increasing daily, what is truly exciting about *Dark Sun: Crimson Sands* is not the quantity of players, but the different personalities and characteristics each person brings to the game. Just as in real life, the mix of different personality types is what creates the spark of love, anger, competition, and so on. So to will the case be in *Dark Sun: Crimson Sands* when different characters begin to interact with each other. Given the carefully crafted structure of this exploration-based adventure, SSI has designed the kind of game that will undoubtedly be played differently by everyone involved and it's this measure of uncertainty that makes the prospect of *Dark Sun: Crimson Sands* so exhilarating.

With its extensive reach, not only through the service itself but also in its outstanding presence on the World Wide Web, TEN is really the only organization able to offer the proper support for a game like *Dark Sun: Crimson Sands*. It's exactly this kind of extensive RPG that demands a support network of live chat arenas and continuous communication channels between users to keep the game moving. In providing this kind of structure players can not only enjoy themselves in the game, but can occasionally take a step back from the experience and view it in a different light.

Duke Nukem **3D**

Publisher: **3d Realms**

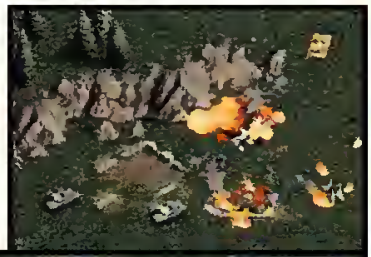
The hottest 3D action game available on the PC. *Duke Nukem 3D* picks up where all the others left off with its amazingly interactive backgrounds, twisted sense of humor, and high-intensity action. Ready for immediate download via the games area on the TEN web-site, *Duke Nukem 3D* Shareware is one way to play *Duke Online*. However, if you own a full retail version of the game, you'll be able to take advantage of every explosive level with some of the hottest players around.

One of TEN's most awesome exclusives, *Duke* is a big favorite.

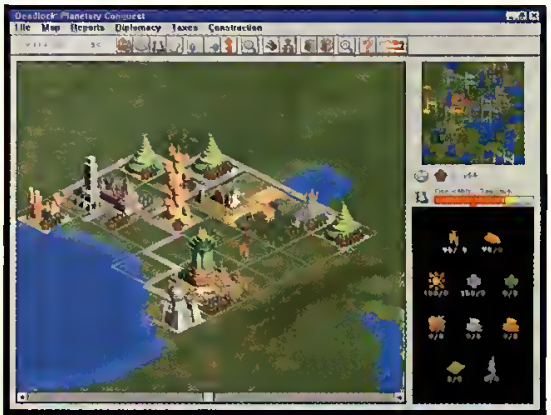
Command **& Conquer**

Publisher: **Westwood Studios**

One of the greatest war/strategy games of all time, *Command & Conquer* requires fast thinking and a killer instinct. Another of TEN's exciting highlights, *Command & Conquer* is the ultimate in multiplayer action. To play *Command & Conquer*, you'll need to have the full retail version of the game on your hard drive as well as downloading a special file from the TEN website. While there is no question that *Command & Conquer* is one of the most rewarding games around, it only gets better in multiplayer action.



From WestWood Studios comes this realtime classic.



Build detailed empires in this intriguing strategy game.

Deadlock

Publisher: **Accolade**

In *Deadlock* there is one planet and it's your responsibility to colonize and take control of it. With some of the most intricately designed 3D graphics and intriguing storyline features, *Deadlock* offers enough substance for even the most expert empire building fanatic while still maintaining a very easy learning curve for those just getting started. Choose from one of seven races and get started building the most sound colony you can muster. You're in charge and your colonists are depending on you to create the perfect environment for them to live and thrive.

The game that started it all, *Warcraft* is an extremely popular choice at TEN.

War**Craft**

Publisher: **Blizzard**

The original struggle between Orcs and Humans, *Warcraft* set the standard for strategy games as we know them today. Featuring more than two dozen campaigns as well as additional custom scenarios, this game has exactly the kind of lifespan and playability to make it an outstanding online gaming experience. To play *Warcraft* on TEN you need only download a special version from the TEN website. Also, with *Warcraft*'s two-player limit, this is truly the perfect game for those just getting started in multiplayer gaming.

The sport of racing will never seem the same after playing the explosive *Necrodome* from SSI.

Necrodome Shareware

Publisher: **SSI**

Racing isn't what it used to be. In fact, all-out warfare isn't even what it used to be in SSI's *Necrodome*. The future's newest bloodsport comes to the PC in a big way on TEN. *Necrodome* from SSI is a high-impact 3D shooting game with great multi-player potential. Download the latest version from The Beta Zone as well as the DirectX 2 drivers necessary to bury yourself in the action. Featuring true cooperative play — allowing one player to drive the car and another to take care of the shooting, *Necrodome* is packed-to-the-gills with competitive "racing" action.

Panzer General **Online**

Publisher: **SSI**

Considered by many to be one of the best war games of all time, *Panzer General Online*, makes it exclusive debut on TEN. Test your skills against some of the greatest strategic minds online with this TEN-only version of SSI's masterpiece. To play *Panzer General Online*, you need DirectX 2 drivers which you can download from TEN. You can also download a full instruction manual if you're interested in taking the game to its limits. *Panzer General* may not be as fast paced as *QUAKE*, but the game is every bit as intense.

War-game fans rejoice, *Panzer General* is on TEN.

Big Red Racing

Publisher: **Eidos**

When it comes to high-speed racing action online, there is no finer example than *Big Red Racing* from Eidos Interactive. Choosing from a selection of 24 tracks and a wide variety of vehicles, such as dumptrucks, backhoes, or even hover crafts, *Big Red Racing* is far from the traditional lap around the track. Supporting up to five players per race, the multiplayer aspect of this fast-paced racing game can simply not be overestimated. Demonstrating TEN's ability to offer a variety of gaming genres, *Big Red Racing* is an extremely nice way to round out an already exciting line-up.

Race a variety of vehicles in Eidos' *Big Red Racing*.

An Hour in the Life of

A quick game of *Command & Conquer* (or ten) is a great way to socialize, compete and have fun with friends across the country

DeathStoat

DeathStoat, (aka Chris Gorsky) is a Civil Engineering student at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. He enjoys the town's great sports heritage and its thriving music scene, but he also enjoys playing PC games and talking to people about his passion for games and technology. He likes to take the time after class to log on to TEN. Once he's on, he heads straight to his favorite chat room in the *Command & Conquer* arena. He's made some good friends since he joined TEN, and he's always interested in meeting new people there.

Today when he logs on he immediately recognizes two names in the chat room. Both in the Central Time Zone, they keep pretty similar hours to Chris. After chatting with his two friends about past matches of *C&C*, the three of them decide it's time to play. Having played together before they know each others' strategies pretty well and so the competition is especially satisfying. An hour passes quickly and Chris realizes it's time to get ready for a night on the town, and so he ends his game, says good-bye and disconnects knowing that he'll probably find his two friends there again tomorrow.

TEN's Top Duke Players

FOR THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 15TH, 1996

ScreenName	Rank	Score	Games	Kills	Deaths	Avg	Class
Smits	1	790	127	1129	51	95%	Death Machine
Gauwd	2	1769	29	1300	69	95%	Death Machine
MadClown	3	1742	94	743	[illegible]	81%	One Man Army
Jimm[illegible]	4	[illegible]	[illegible]	3579	167	90%	One Man Army
KaiserSose	5	[illegible]	211	2436	195	94%	One Man Army
SirWarsNut	6	[illegible]	114	1555	[illegible]	96%	One Man Army
Rards	7	1700	200	2267	280	89%	One Man Army
Quil	8	1701	90	1286	159	89%	One Man Army
cockroach	9	1700	185	4241	279	93%	One Man Army

NarVack

NarVack (aka Jim Gstinsic) works as an administrative assistant for a lobbiest firm in Washington, D.C. The job's OK and there's plenty to learn, but on the pressure and monotony of the work can get him down. Nothing beats the stress like a lunch-hour spent killing everyone who crosses his path in *Duke Nukem 3D*. Since he's still technically at work, he can't spend a lot of time online trying to find other people willing to play so he appreciates that TEN always has people logged-on.

On an especially tedious day, Jim spent the morning filing and by the time lunchtime rales around he's ready for some kind

Three TEN Users

Meet new people and try new things, TEN is never the same thing twice.

of escape. As soon as the boss is gone to his daily power lunch, he's logged on and heading straight to the *Duke Nukem 3D* arena. As he usual, there are several people already playing and Jim has his choice of games to join. After quickly checking the rankings board to see how good the players in each game are, he picks the game with the best players on the site. Jim, as he'll humbly tell you, rocks at *Duke Nukem 3D* is always anxious to up his stats. He plays a particularly ferocious game, even defeating the highest ranked players, but soon realizes it's time to get back to work. Recharged by the idea that he has dramatically improved his own ranking, he disconnects and goes back to filing with a smile on his face (and killing on his mind).

LordElren

LordElren (aka Raymond Rowe) got married a little more than a year ago and moved to Miami to practice law. He doesn't know many people in town and both he and his wife work long hours. No problem, except he's a night person and his wife, a marine biologist, isn't. Raymond was spending most nights watching cable alone or playing his PlayStation till he decided to try TEN on a PC his in-laws gave him for a wedding gift.

On this particular night Phil and his wife go to bed at around 11, but by 11:30 he's slipping out of bed and heading to the den to see what's going on at TEN. He used to be surprised that there was so much activity late at night, but he's already come to count on that fact. Unlike some players on TEN, he doesn't have a favorite game he likes to play every time. Instead, he checks out what's going on all over the site before making a choice. He likes the 18+ rule, because at 28 he's not really interested in talking about Beavis and Butthead.

After chatting with someone from San Francisco, he accepts an invitation to play SSI's *Necrodome*. Having heard lots of great things about the game, he's excited to try it out. After downloading the shareware version directly from TEN, he ends up having a great time playing. At about 1:30 he's really starting to get the hang of the game, but he's got court tomorrow, so he decides it's time for bed. As he's shutting down he thinks that he'll have to log on tomorrow for some more *Necrodome*.

How To Log On To TEN

IF YOU HAVE INTERNET ACCESS

If you already have access to the World Wide Web, getting logged on to TEN is as easy as visiting the TEN Web site at *www.ten.net*. Once you're logged on to the web site simply follow the easy instructions for downloading the official TEN software. The whole process takes only a few minutes, but keep in mind you will need a valid credit card to get signed up. Once you've downloaded the software and established your password you'll be asked if you would like to use your own Internet connection or one of TEN's local dial-up numbers. Choose one and you are ready to go.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE ACCESS TO THE WEB?

If you don't have access to the Internet, don't worry because it's not necessary to use TEN. If you can't download the software from TEN's Web site there are two other very easy ways to get it. In fact, you already have the necessary software if you own the full retail versions of Accolade's Deadlock or 3D Realms's *Duke Nukem 3D*. If so, simply choose the TEN option built in to the game and follow the simple instructions for getting signed up. Also remember that the full TEN software is included on the disc that came with this issue. If you do not have the full retail version of one of these games you can still get a free copy of the software by simply calling (415) 778-3733.

Want to **PLAY**
the **HOTTEST** exclusive titles **ONLINE?**
With **THOUSANDS** of other people?
At the **SAME** time?

We **THOUGHT** so.

TURN to page 231
to see **HOW.**

Next Generation gamers guide

Every new "next-generation" game, rated for your perusal

The following list is a round-up of all the final review scores given to next generation console games. Titles with the suffix (Japan) are not available in the U.S. Happy hunting...

Nintendo 64

Title	Publisher	NG Rating
Super Mario 64	Nintendo	★★★★★
Pilot Wings	Nintendo	★★★★★

PlayStation

Title	Publisher	NG Rating
Adidas Power Soccer	Psygnosis	★★★
Agile Warrior	Virgin	★★
Alien Trilogy	Acclaim	★★★★
A-Train	SCE	★★★
Aquanaut's Holiday (Japan)	ArtDink	★★★★
Arc The Lad (Japan)	SCE	★★★★
Battle Arena Toshinden	SCE	★★★★
Battle Arena Toshinden 2	SCE	★★★★
Beyond the Beyond	SCE	★★
Black Dawn	Virgin	★★★★
Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain	Activision	★★★★
Bogey Dead 6	Sony	★★★
Bottom of the Ninth	Konami	★★★★
Boxer's Road (Japan)	New Corp	★★★
Cosmic Race (Japan)	Neorex	★
Crash Bandicoot	SCE	★★★
Crime Crackers (Japan)	Sony Entertainment	★★
Criticom	Vic Tokai	★★
Cybera	Interplay	★★★
Cyberspeed	Mindscape	★★★
Cyber Sled	Namco	★★
Cyber War (Japan)	Coco Nuts	★★
Defcon 5	Data East	★★★★
Dark Stalkers	Capcom	★★★
Deception	Tecmo	★★★
Descent	Interplay	★★★★
Destruction Derby	Psygnosis	★★★★
Disruptor	Universal Interactive	★★★★
Die Hard Trilogy	Fox Interactive	★★★★
Doom	Williams	★★★★
Dragon Ball Z (Japan)	Bandai	★★
Fade to Black	Electronic Arts	★★★★
Final Doom	Williams	★★★
Formula 1	Psygnosis	★★★★★
Gex	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Goal Storm	Konami	★★★★
Gridrunner	Virgin	★★★
Gunner's Heaven (Japan)	Media Vision	★★★★
Gunship	Microprose	★★
Hardball 5	Accolade	★★
In the Zone	Konami	★★★
Iron & Blood	Acclaim	★★
Jumping Flash!	SCE	★★★★★
Jumping Flash! 2	Sony	★★★★
Jupiter Strike	Acclaim	★
Kileak The DNA Imperative	SME	★★★
Kileak The Blood 2	SME	★★
Killing Time	Naxat Soft	★
King's Field	Asciiware	★★★★
Krazy Ivan	Psygnosis	★★★
Loaded	Interplay	★★★★
Madden '97	EA Sport	★★★★
Metol Jocket (Japan)	Solan	★
Mobile Suit Gundam (Japan)	Bandai	★★
Mortal Kombat 3	Publisher	★★★
Motor Toon GP (Japan)	SCE	★★
Namco Museum vol 1	Namco	★★★★
Namco Museum vol. 2	Namco	★★
NASCAR Racing	Sierra	★★
NBA Jam Tournament Ed'	Acclaim	★★★★
NBA Live '96	Electronic Arts	★★★★
NBA Shoot Out	Sony Interactive	★★★
NCAA Gamebraker	Sony Interactive	★★★★
NFL Gameday	Sony Interactive	★★★★★
NHL Face Off	Sony Interactive	★★★★★
Olympic Soccer	U.S. Gold	★★★
Perfect Weapon	ASC Games	★★
PGA Tour Invitational '96	Electronic Arts	★★★
Philosoma	SCE	★★
Po'ed	Accolade	★★★★
Power Serve 3-D Tennis	Ocean	★★★
Power Baseball (Japan)	Konami	★
Project. Horned Owl	Sony	★★★
Project Overkill	Konami	★★★★
Raiden	Selbu	★★
Rayman	UbiSoft	★★★★
Return Fire	Time Warner Int.	★★★★
Resident Evil	Capcom	★★★★★
Ridge Racer	Namco	★★★★
Ridge Racer Revolution	Namco	★★
Road Rash	Electronic Arts	★★★
Raba Pit	T-HQ	★★★
Romance of the 3 King' IV	Koei	★★★
Soviet Strike	Electronic Arts	★★★★
Shellshock	U.S. Gold	★★★★
Shockwave Assault	Electronic Arts	★★
Sidewinder	Asmic	★★★
Silverlode	Vic Tokai	★★★★
SimCity 2000	Maxis	★★★
Slam 'n' Jam	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Spoce Griffon	Atlus	★★
Spoce Hulk	Electronic Arts	★★★
Spot Goes to Hollywood	Virgin Interactive	★
Stor Gladiator	Capcom	★★★
StorWinder	Mindscape	★★★
Steel Harbinger	Mindscape	★★★
Street Racer	UBI Soft	★★★★
Tekken	Namco	★★★★
Tekken 2	Namco	★★★★★
TempestX	High Voltage Software	★★★★
Tobal No 1	Sony CE	★★★★
Tokyo Highway Battle	Jaleco	★★★
Top Gun	Spectrum Holobyte	★★
Total Eclipse Turbo	Crystal Dynamics	★★
Toukon Retsuden (Japan)	Tomy	★★★★
Twisted Metol	SIE	★★★★
Viewpoint	Electronic Arts	★
Warhawk	Sony Interactive	★★★★
Wipeout	Psygnosis	★★★★★
Worms	Ocean of America	★★★★
WWF Wrestlemania	Acclaim	★★★★
X-Com UFO Defense	Microprose	★★★★★
Zero Divide	Zoom	★★★

Saturn

Title	Publisher	NG Rating
Alien Trilogy	Acclaim	★★★★
Alone in the Dark	T-HQ	★★★
Astal	Sega	★★★
Battle Arena Tosh' Remix	Sega	★★★
Battle Monster (Japan)	Naxat Soft	★★
Blackfire	Sega	★★★
Bug!	Sega	★★★
Clockwork Knight	Sega	★★★
Clockwork Knight 2 (Japan)	Sega	★★★
Congo the Movie	Sega	★★
Cyberspeed	Mindscape	★★★
D	Acclaim	★★★
Dark Legends (Japan)	Data East	★★
Daytona USA	Sega	★★★★
Deadalus (Japan)	Sega	★★★
Decodent	Sega	★★★★
Double Switch	Digital Pictures	★★
Earthworm Jim 2	Playmates	★★★
FIFA Soccer	Electronic Arts	★★★★★
Fighting Vipers	Sega	★★★★★
F-1 Live	Sega	★★★★
Frank Thomas Baseball	Acclaim	★★★
Galactic Attack	Acclaim	★★★
Gekkamugentan-Tonco (Japan)	Sega-Japan	★★★★
Ghen War	Sega	★★★
Golden Axe The Duel	Sega	★★★
Gotha (Japan)	Sega	★★★
Guardi an Heroes (Japan)	Sega	★★★
Hang-On GP '95	Sega	★★★
Hi-Octane	EA	★★
High Velocity	Atlus	★★★
Iron Storm	Working Designs	★★★★
Johnny Bazookatone	US Gold	★★★
Krazy Ivan	Sega	★★
Last Gladiators (Japan)	Kaze Co	★★★★
Legend of Dasis	Sega	★★★★

WARNING: Before Playing, Notify Your Next of Kin.

Incoming! Incaming! Missile Alert! Battleship is now on CD-ROM. 2 killer games in 1: Classic and Ultimate. This ain't pegs and plastic, it's fully laaded with intense, hi-resolution 3-D graphics, enhanced 16-bit audio effects and nerve-wracking real time battle. You attack while you're being attacked! Fight above and below the water in over 2000 square miles of ocean. Yau can even battle far naval supremacy around the globe an the Internet. But hey, if you can't stand the heat, get aut of the acean.

BATTLESHIP®

CD-ROM

HASBRO Interactive

www.hasbro.com WIN 95

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Title	Publisher	NG Rating
Loaded	Interplay	★★★
Mansion of Hidden Souls	Sega	★★★
Mortal Kombat II	Acclaim	★★★
Myst	SunSoft	★★★
NHL All-Star Hockey '96	Sega	★★
NHL Powerplay '96	Virgin Interactive	★★★★★
Night Warriors	Capcom	★★★
Nights	Sega	★★★★★
Off-World Interceptor	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Panzer Dragoon	Sega	★★★★
Panzer Dragoon II Zwei	Sega	★★★★
Pebble Beach Golf Links	Sega	★★★
Riglord Saga (Japan)	Sega	★★★
Robo-Pit	Kokopelli	★★★
Quarterback Attack	Digital Pictures	★★★
Quarterback Club '97	Acclaim	★★★
Saturn Bomberman	Hudson (Japan)	★★★★
Sega Rally Championship	Sega	★★★★★
Shellshock	US Gold	★★★
Shinobi Legions	Sega	★★★
Shining Force	Working Designs	★★★
Shining Wisdom	Working Designs	★★★
SimCity	Maxis	★★★
Skeleton Warriors	Playmates	★★★
SteamGear Mash	Takara (Japan)	★★
Street Fighter The Movie	Acclaim	★★★
Street Fighter Alpha 2	Capcom	★★★★
Striker	Acclaim	★
Tama (Japan)	Tengen	★★
Tetris Plus	Jaleco	★★★
Theme Park	Electronic Arts	★★★
3D Baseball	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Three Dirty Dwarves	Sega	★★★
ThunderStrike 2	US Gold	★★★★
True Pinball	Ocean	★★★
Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3	Williams	★★★
Virtua Cop	Sega	★★★★
Virtua Fighter	Sega	★★★★
Virtua Fighter Kids	Sega	★★★★
Virtua Fighter Remix	Sega	★★★★★
Virtua Fighter 2	Sega	★★★★★
Virtua Racing	Time Warner	★★★
Virtual Hydlide	Atlus	★★
Virtual Open Tennis	Acclaim	★★★
Virtual Volleyball (Japan)	Imagineer	★
Wicked 18	Vic Tokai	★★★
Wing Arms	Sega	★★★
Wipeout	Sega	★★★★
World Cup Golf: Pro' Edition	US Gold	★★★
World Series Baseball	Sega	★★★★
World Series Baseball II	Sega (Japan)	★★★★★
Worldwide Soccer	Sega	★★★
Worms	Ocean of America	★★★★
X-Men: Child' of the Atom	Capcom	★★★

For your information

Here's what the ratings signify:

★★★★★ Revolutionary
★★★★ Excellent
★★★ Good
★★ Average
★ Bad

IT SEEMS EVERY AD TRIES TO SELL YOU A GAME WITH MORE

GUTS,

MORE BUTTS,

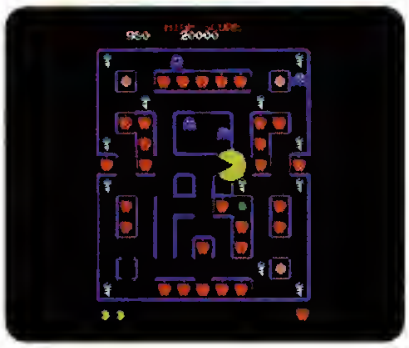
MORE SMUT,

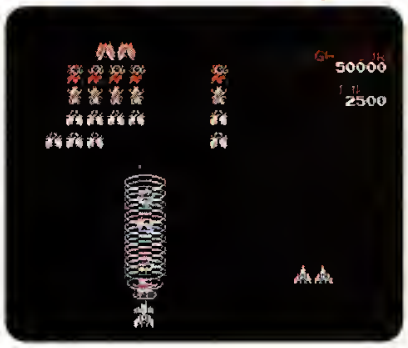
AND MORE NUTS.

S.U.P.E.R PAC-MAN™

GAPLUS™

MAPPY™





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KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
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PlayStation™

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Madden '97 PlayStation **Fighting Vipers** Saturn **The Pandora Directive** PC **Disruptor** PlayStation
Street Fighter Alpha 2 Saturn **Formula 1** PlayStation **World Series Baseball** Saturn **Final Doom** Playstation

finals

We play the games, and then we review them for you

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Each month, come rain or shine, the unstoppable **Nwxt Generation** team of diehard gamers reviews and rates the month's new game releases. Our opinion as to each game's ments is expounded on in the text, but for a rough guide to a game's worth (or lack of it) refer the following ratings.

★★★★★ **Revolutionary**
Brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed; a new high-water mark.

★★★★ **Excellent**
A high-quality and inventive new game. Either a step forward for an existing genre, or a successful attempt at creating a new one.

★★★ **Good**
A solid and competitive example of an established game style.

★★ **Average**
Perhaps competent; certainly uninspired.

★ **Bad**
Crucially flawed in design or application.

PlayStation

Deception

Publisher: Tecmo
Developer: Tecmo

This first-person, 3D graphic adventure starts with a doozy of a premise: make the player the bad guy. As the Master of the Castle of the Damned, the player watches for adventurers entering the castle, then tracks them, traps them, and kills them, all with the eventual goal of resurrecting Satan. No lie.

A little backstory may help: the player's character is the first-born prince of a peaceful kingdom. The younger prince murdered the king and framed the player. While waiting to be burned at the stake, the player becomes disgusted by the treachery of his own family and the fickleness of the people and calls out for help from God or the Devil. Take a guess who answers. Eventually, of course, things take a more altruistic turn, and the player does make good triumph over evil.

Until then however, *Deception* is one of the strangest and subtlely disturbing games we've ever played. When your only options after trapping a hapless mortal are "Strip his soul for magic," "Kill him for gold," or "Save his body for building monsters," you know you're not in Kansas anymore. The scene with the young daughter, forlornly calling out the window to her adventurer parents, "Mommy, Daddy, why don't you come home?" induced more than a few stomach knots.

On the other hand, you can't attack victims directly, only lure them into traps, and while more strategically interesting than a 3D shooter, it's oddly passive. The pace is slow, the story takes a while to get rolling, and you can only save one game at a time.

Despite these faults however, there's no denying that with its polygon-modeled and texture-mapped environment and characters, *Deception* looks great. It offers hours of playtime, and, in execution if not structure, it's unlike anything you've ever played before. For a game that offers a touch of the dark side, it's more than worth a look.
Rating: ★★★

With its dsrk storyline and strangsly disturbing gosls, *Decsption* is ons of ths mors notsworthy titles of ths season, dsspits soms flsws

Disruptor

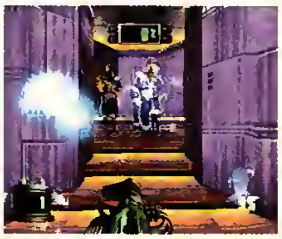
Publisher: Universal Interactive
Developer: Insomniac Games

As Universal's second title, (*Crash Bandicoot* was Universal's before it sold to Sony) *Disruptor* brings high-quality production to the tried-and-true *Doom* formula.

As a space marine, the player is thrown into a variety of futuristic environments. Unlike the repetitive brick tunnels of *Doom*, each of the thirteen levels has its own distinctive look, from an icy Antarctic base to a surreal dream sequence with bizarre aliens. While the gameplay is extremely similar to most first-person shooters, *Disruptor* implements "Psionic" weapons, which are basically sci-fi spells. The strategy involves more tactical gunplay and resourceful Psionic use, with less find-the-key objectives. And gameplay changes as the levels grow progressively tougher; particularly hair-raising is the escape from a time-bombed reactor.

Designed exclusively for the PlayStation, the game takes advantage of the hardware's polygon and lighting capabilities. The levels implement texture-rich, polygonal architecture, distinguishing *Disruptor* as the first true 3D first-person shooter for the PlayStation. Players experience a new feeling of depth in moving through the levels, and the lighting and reflections seen in Psionic effects enhance this sense of realism. But the sprite-based enemies, while well-drawn and scaled decently, bring back a bit of the 2D feel.

The audio is impressive. Like *Magic Carpet*'s interactive score, the game introduces intense music during battle, and lighter tracks during non-combative exploration. The sound effects are all studio quality, with excellent weaponry bursts and dying cries.



***Disruptor*'s Psionic wsspons add to the standsrd shootisg sction**

Well-balanced, with good control, nice graphics, on-the-fly strategy, secret areas, and good sound, *Disruptor* gives the player everything new that it can within a genre saturated with mediocrity. For those who have finished *Alien Trilogy*, here lies your next challenge.
Rating: ★★★★

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PlayStation

STRIKE FOUR

Soviet Strike

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: EA Studios

EA Studios has finally shipped a PlayStation title that isn't a retouched 3DO game, and *Soviet Strike* delivers real 32-bit firepower while staying true to its roots. As the title suggests, this newest *Strike* game sends chopper pilots on covert missions into unstable Soviet regions. With two overhead views — the traditional *Strike* camera and a new, locked-on chase view — the player explores five large terrains, with between 5 and 10 different mission objectives per terrain map. The objectives are familiar yet widely varied, including knocking out power plants, rescuing POWs, and destroying weapon installations. Retaining the "thinking man's shooter" design, resource management is a big part of this game, as is the surgical precision required to dismantle enemy forces.

The photo-realistic terrain, like Siberia, seen above, lends fantastic credibility to each combat environment

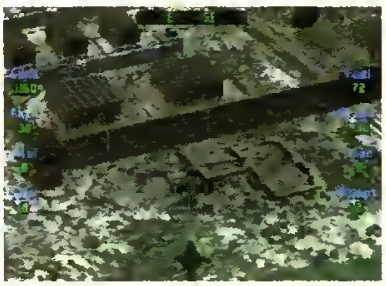
A real-time, living battlefield enhances the urgency of the missions and the player's involvement. In the first level, for example, your co-pilot must be rescued to avoid a firing squad. If the player is too late reaching the prison compound, the co-pilot is actually seen escorted from his cell and executed against the wall. Even better though, with sharp-shooting, you can save him at the last minute.

While the animation and explosions are average, the game makes a giant leap forward in terms of the environment. The rendered, nearly photo-realistic topography and fully polygon-modeled buildings and vehicles form an impressive 3D landscape. Also worth mentioning are the stylish FMV clips, which for once are well-acted and not overly intrusive. The audio is also exemplary, with excellent wartime sound effects, battle music, and some well-written dialogue that includes humorous shouts from Soviet troops, and all with practically no load time.

Of course, minor flaws do exist: the heads-up display smacks of 16-bit era graphics, but the worst problem is the limited view of the terrain. Players will frequently have to stop and switch to the map to find things; although this limited view has been a part of the *Strike* series since day one.

However, this really is quibbling. By no means easy, and by no means a short game, the *Strike* series has made the leap to 32-bit with a thoughtfulness and style that should be considered a reference point for all future 32-bit upgrades.

Rating: ★★★★



Your co-pilot is being held hostage here. Save him or watch him face the firing squad

Final Doom

Publisher: Williams
Developer: Williams/id

Hands down, the original *Doom* for PlayStation was the best version available for home consoles — smooth, dead-on control, lots of great lighting effects, the complete *Doom* plus *Doom II* on one disk, and a cracking surround-sound mix. It was a blast.

Final Doom also includes two complete games: *Final Doom* from the designers at id, and the TNT levels, composed of the best fan-designed *Doom* WADs (some of which are much, much nastier than anything id came up with). But there's trouble in paradise, or Hell, as the case may be: *Final Doom* is jerky, with a noticeably low frame rate, imprecise control, and too many spots where seams show in the textures. In a side-by-side comparison, *Final Doom* didn't even come close to the quality of the original. Why this happened isn't exactly clear: granted, the version supplied by Williams wasn't a shrink-wrapped copy, just a final beta on gold disk. This is, however, the format most reviewable material is supplied on, and it was clearly labeled as final and reviewable. Certainly there can't be enough of a difference between a master CD and the box copy to make up for the deficiencies. At press time, Williams is hip-deep in development of *Doom 64* for Nintendo 64 — which, incidentally, looks incredible — so perhaps *Final Doom* simply fell by the development wayside.

More of the same, yet less than before: Williams's *Final Doom*

In any case, *Final Doom* is far from unplayable. In fact, it has much the same action you'd expect from *Doom* and a severe challenge even for *Doom* veterans. Had the original PlayStation *Doom* not been so perfect, we might not have been as critical of *Final Doom*. But it was, and we are.

Rating: ★★★

Formula 1

Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Bizarre Creations

Despite the plethora of racing games available on next-gen systems, there has yet to be a title that truly satisfies the hardcore race fan on all levels. With its exquisite graphics, wide range of challenges, and startling amount of depth, *Formula 1* is the game that changes everything.

The graphics in *Formula 1* practically jump out at you. Few titles have made the leap expected from the second generation of PlayStation games, but *F1* proves that there is plenty of potential in the machine to be exploited. From the exquisitely rendered cars, to the detailed track and its surroundings, *Formula 1* displays state-of-the-art videogame graphics that perfectly convey the atmosphere of the race environment.

***Formula 1*: the answer to every PSX racing fan's prayers**

Accompanying the superb graphics is gameplay that ranks near simulation quality. All 17 tracks from the actual *Formula 1* season have been recreated to serve as the proving ground for races featuring 24 competitors. An Arcade mode enables novice

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racers to jump right in and begin testing their driving skills, but after a few races most gamers will probably opt for the significantly more difficult Grand Prix mode, with its more accurate racing dynamics. There's even an option in Grand Prix mode that can set the length of each race to the actual number of laps of the real-life racing event. Considering the challenge someone would face racing 17 full-length *Formula 1* courses on the hardest setting in Grand Prix mode, the word "depth" hardly seems to do the game justice.
Rating: ★★★★★

Iron & Blood: Warriors of RavenLoft

Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Take 2 Interactive
Originally planned for M2, *Iron & Blood*'s noble concept of taking licensed AD&D fantasy characters and setting them in a 3D fighting environment is ultimately flawed — the fighting feels secondary to the license.

The game plays in two modes: Head-to-Head and Campaign. In the traditional Head-To-Head mode, players choose from 16 fighters who range from a one-armed dwarf to a classic hero with a massive sword. The real AD&D influence shows up in the Campaign mode, where players must select a team of fighters, either good or evil, and launch into a long tournament where the prizes include magic artifacts (that work as power-ups), and the chance to add new characters to your party. Also you need to alternate characters between matches to give the character who just fought time to heal.

Graphically, the polygonal, Gouraud-shaded characters are well-detailed and smoothly animated. The gameplay is fast, but very reminiscent of *Toshinden*. The only inventive feature is an energy-charged barrier that encircles the ring, damaging players who make contact with it and making ring-outs impossible. The combos are limited, the special moves are cliched, and without any noticeable enhancements brought to the actual fighting, the action feels passé. The digitized speech and special effects are average, and the techno soundtrack seems laughably anachronistic against the medieval visuals.

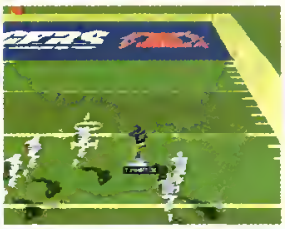
While *Take 2* should be applauded for trying something different with a fantasy license, the fighting, unlike *Tobal No. 1*, just doesn't innovate at all.
Rating: ★★

Madden '97

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: Visual Concepts
No sports series can even come close to the success of EA's *Madden Football*, and when last year's version got canned, it shocked and disappointed thousands of fans. So what has EA done in two years to win back the hearts of once-loyal *Madden* fans? Simple: make the best *Madden* ever.

Madden has always been about a great two-player game with all the real players, plays, stats, and options. *Madden '97* has stuck to that basic formula, but upped the ante on every count. The graphics are crystal clear with smooth animation and detailed uniforms for each NFL team. The stats are exhaustive and presented in an easy-to-use and classy manner. The plays are usual *Madden* fare with a few updates and the list of options just keeps growing. As for the gameplay, the two-player game is better than ever. Tight control, top speed, and great arcade-style gameplay are sure to make the Sunday mornings before football that much more enjoyable.

***Iron & Blood*'s detailed characters are cut from TSR's *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* mold. Too bad the fighting isn't any more exciting than rolling dice**



The best football series ever is back in style with *Madden '97*

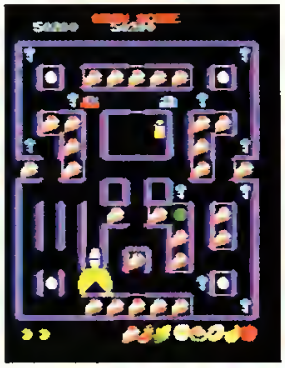
What makes the two-player game so inspiring is the impeccable control and skill required. As quarterback you have to spot an open receiver and decide whether a bullet or lob is best, then switch to the wide receiver where you have to position and time yourself to make the catch. On the other side of the ball, you make a mad rush for the QB then as the pass is released switch to a DB and try to break up the pass with a perfectly timed jump or hit. Get too rough, and the flag flies for a little pass interference.

Unfortunately, *Madden* does have a flaw or two, the biggest being the computer AI — once again, one play always fools it. *Madden* has always had plays like these, and it's always ruined the one-player game. That play alone dropped the score on *Madden '97* one full star, because once you figure out what it is (and no, we won't tell you), there's no challenge left. And when there's no challenge, there's no more reason to play through a season. However, the two-player mode is still good enough to rank *Madden* as one of the best football titles available.
Rating: ★★★★

Namco's Museum Volume 2

Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco
Unlike Namco's first *Museum* collection, *Volume 2* just doesn't provide enough good classics. With a total of six games, only *Super Pac-Man* (not available in the Japanese version) and shooters *Gaplus* and *Xevious*, are really worth spending time with. The other three are obscure to say the least — *Mappy*, *Grobda*, and *Dragon Buster* — all are examples of game genres that have evolved way beyond these originals, and with good reason. *Grobda*, an overhead view tank game, isn't much more than a one-player *Combat* with multiple enemies and a shield. In *Mappy*, the player becomes the title character, a mouse who must trap crooks and bounce between high-rise stories on trampoline. And (ugh) *Dragon Buster* is a very 8-bit looking, side-scrolling dungeon adventure with virtually no nostalgia factor and absolutely no redeeming gameplay.

As in the first *Museum* disc, the games are presented using their original code running through a JAMMA emulator, so again, the control, graphics, and sound are arcade perfect. The dip switches allow you to adjust the difficulty just like the original arcade boards, and you get the original cabinet artwork for each game. Also, the first-person, *Doom*-style museum is included to look at the game's memorabilia, but like before, the loading time involved in looking at the exhibits is atrocious.



***Namco Museum vol. 2* lacks the class of the first volume**

Only the most die-hard classic game collectors will want this disc, and they'll only want half of it. Namco should more closely consider the future line-up in its classic series.
Rating: ★★

NASCAR Racing

Publisher: Sierra
Developer: Papyrus
This title isn't for the racing fan who enjoys cool scenery. It's not for the racing fan who wants to be seen in the hottest car. It's not for the racing fan who wants to leave other racing game fans in the dust. *NASCAR Racing* is for the die-hard stock car racing fan who loves *NASCAR* so much they don't care what kind of package it comes in. Everyone else, well, you're out of luck.

The game includes all the usual racing extras: driver stats,

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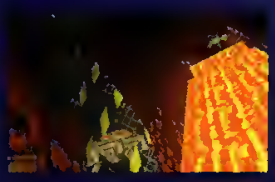

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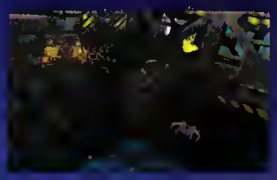
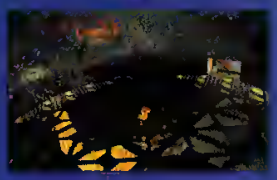


"The sequel of the year"
Computer Game Review



"5 out of 5 Stars!"
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Descent II Developed by Parallax Software

famous tracks like Sears Point, three levels of stock cars to choose from, and myriad details to keep track of for each car — tire status, fuel, and so on. From a graphics standpoint, however, things are less than spectacular. While stock car racing necessarily involves only one type of car, the designers could have put a little more effort into the surroundings — the backgrounds are as boring as the cars. Another big minus for this title is the lack of a two-player mode; what fun is it if you can't challenge your best buddy to a few laps?

Undiscriminating stock car fans may appreciate *NASCAR* more than some, but the average Joe will not be awed by what passes for realism in this game, and instead just get a hankering to play *The Need for Speed*. So, unless you're the kind of person who gets a rush doing fifty laps on the same oval track (and you know who you are), this title isn't for you.
Rating: ★★

PlayStation

WILLING AND ABEL

Carnage runs rampant throughout the game; this battle is the gaming equivalent of *Braveheart*

Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Crystal Dynamics/Silicon Knights

Fantasy adventures with an overhead view have been done before, but not like this. With a stylish, macabre storyline and innovative design elements, *Legacy of Kain* immerses the player in an all-consuming bloodbath of vengeance.

As Kain, a nobleman turned sword-wielding vampire, the player returns from the dead on a grim quest to avenge his assassination. Employing some RPG elements and arcade-style combat reminiscent of *Gauntlet*, Kain's world is huge and extremely gory. The game unfolds through exploration of crypts, towns, castles, and forests. The player must collect spells and weapons and constantly feed upon the blood of enemies and innocent townspeople to remain alive. The anti-hero approach, storyline, and unique design elements tie in well with the gameplay — Kain's vampiric power of shapeshifting enables him to become, among other things, a bat, a werewolf, and even disguise himself as a mortal human to overcome different obstacles. His attack spells are particularly morbid, including numbers like Flay, Implode, and Decay, which result in some particularly gruesome death animations. Along with some morbidly explicit rendered FMV, and Kain's angst-ridden monologues (the voice acting is over the top, but excellent), this game earns every bit of its "Mature" ESRB rating.

Kain, in the starring role, is the only pre-rendered sprite, and his appearance changes as he acquires armor and weapons. All supporting characters appear as traditionally hand-drawn sprites. More notable, however, are the painstakingly detailed backgrounds and lighting effects that complement magic spells. The sound effects are excellent, from the clanging sword, to the eerie music, to some very well-voiced (if occasionally repetitive) dialogue.

The game does have some minor faults and annoyances: at times the scrolling fails to keep pace with your character. Also, when many light-generating sprites appear on the screen, the game meets with some slowdown, and the amount of load time as Kain moves between areas is noticeable and at times intrusive. This takes away from the game.

These troubles aside, it took Crystal over two years to finish this game, and no wonder, considering how the high production standards were maintained with such consistent quality over such a large game world. The wait for this bloodsucking hero was well worth it.
Rating: ★★★★

Feeding on sleeping villagers (left) and crossing blades with a local soldier is all in a day's work

NCAA Gamebreaker

Publisher: Sony Interactive
Developer: Sony Interactive

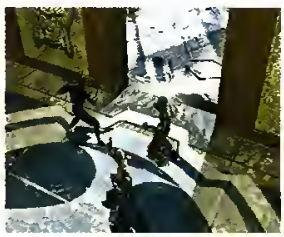
From the developers of *NFL Gameday* comes the first 32-bit college football game. *Gamebreaker* takes all that made *Gameday* a success and mixes in all that makes college football a unique experience to create the best college football game yet.

The only major criticism to be leveled at the original *Gameday* — the somewhat slow pace — is gone. The engine has been tuned, and *Gamebreaker* runs 20% faster and even features adjustable play speed. However, the major advancement in *Gamebreaker* is with the computer AI. Each season game you play goes into the system's memory, so the next computer team you play will have a full scouting report on the plays you tend to call. In theory, this is the biggest advancement in sports games AI in years. Other new additions, such as the players' uniforms getting muddy in the rain or knocking over the chain gang on a sweep, just add to the overall realism. *Gamebreaker* is the best college football game on the market and one of the best football games period.
Rating: ★★★★

Perfect Weapon

Publisher: ASC Gemee
Developer: Gray Matter

From the developer who brought us such unpleasantries as *Foes of Ali* for the 3DO and *NHL All-Star Hockey* for the Saturn, Gray Matter's first combat-adventure for the PlayStation is grand in design but less than impressive in execution.



***Perfect Weapon* offers solid enemies... but poor, poor control**

As champion fighter Blake Hunter, who's been kidnapped by aliens, the player must explore five moons, fighting enemies in hand-to-hand combat at every turn. From the third-person perspective, you explore 3D environments in a similar fashion to *Resident Evil*. However, the shifting camera in this game is atrocious in comparison, harking back to the creaky mechanics of the *Alone in the Dark* series,

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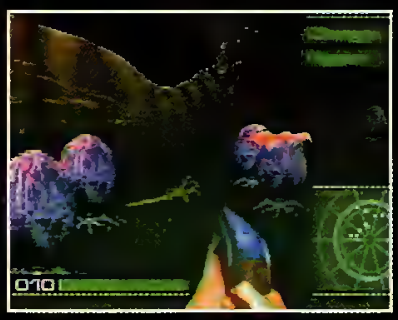

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DOS CD-ROM

FOX INTERACTIVE

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which becomes especially distracting while fighting.

Graphically, the polygonal characters are well-designed, and the rendered backgrounds, especially in the final world, are excellent. But the foreground can be confusing to move around in, in part due to the game's biggest flaw, the control. The two control modes enable you to either explore, as in *Resident Evil*, or fight, with mechanics that attempt to parallel *Tekken*. There's a new wrinkle in that, unlike most fighting games, the player faces multiple enemies. However, the control in both modes is ploddy, and lining up on your opponents is not nearly as intuitive as it should be. Otherwise, the game presents some attractive music and sound, with good voice samples. The load time between areas in a level is virtually nonexistent.

In total, Blake lists over 100 moves that he acquires through beating new enemies. But the elementary movement is stiff. Coupled with poor camerawork, this "could have been good" title becomes frustrating and borderline average. Considering how far this game has come along in development, it's a shame it wasn't finished right.
Rating: ★★

Spot Goes to Hollywood
Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Developer: Burst

The mascot in question is the Cool Spot of 7UP fame, the nondescript product representative second only to Jack in the Box's bubble-headed Jack in dullness. This is, of all things, a 32-bit port of the 16-bit title that annoyed us last year, with no significant upgrades or extras. This is a real letdown, considering that the original *Cool Spot* of a few years ago was one of the better side-scrolling action titles of its era.

The current concept is this: our hero is inadvertently sucked into a movie camera and becomes the star of several adventures based on movie plotlines — a Captain Hook-like battle on a ship, a trip through a haunted house, and of course the obligatory Indiana-Jones-inspired mine cart level. But no matter what the setting is, the objective stays the same: pick up spots, avoid or kill bad guys, and get through the level. Nothing new here. At least Mario and Sonic have some personality, and the designers of those games understand that half the fun is the lure of exploration and the thrill of discovery. *Spot* just goes through the motions.

To add to the list of grievances, since *Spot* is in isometric view and mostly moves in diagonal directions, control is a real pain, and the ability to switch the controls to diagonal settings just makes it more confusing. Any 10-year-old (and it's hard to imagine anyone else being interested) is bound to throw down the controller in disgust after, say, the umpteenth failure maneuvering Spot along a narrow rope bridge.

Go back to pushing pop, kid.
Rating: ★

Star Gladiator
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom

It's been suggested that *Star Gladiator*, Capcom's first dalliance in the field of 3D fighting, is little more than a way to test the waters for upcoming

The shape of Capcom to come? 3D warriors in *Star Gladiators*

3D *Street Fighter* games such as *Street Fighter Gaiden*. While there is probably some truth to this theory, *Star Gladiator* is a pretty good game all on its own. Groundbreaking in its use of animated backgrounds, the galactic environment of *Star Gladiator* could only be described as an extremely lively one. Whether fighting in the middle of an active airfield or in the midst of an electrified downtown area, the backgrounds are nearly as interesting to watch as the fights themselves.

As for the actual fighting, the game doesn't carve much new ground for itself. It does, however, perform at peak levels of efficiency in just about every established category of 3D fighting. From the lightning-fast 3D movement to the elaborate throw moves, *Star Gladiator* cuts no corners in gameplay. The game does manage to introduce a new (derivative though it may be) combo system that enables the characters to branch combo chains in a number of different directions, giving it that much more of a life span. What's missing from *Star Gladiator*, however, is that magical spark that separates the good from the great. Certainly, the game is an encouraging sign of things to come, but *Star Gladiator* just doesn't feel like the dead-on classic we would expect Capcom to produce as it moves into the 3D future.
Rating: ★★★

StarWinder
Developer: Mindscape
Publisher: Mindscape

Futuristic racing games are all the rage since the success of *Wipeout* on the PlayStation. Unfortunately, no other title has approached *Wipeout*'s visuals or exceptional gameplay, and *StarWinder* is no exception.

The game begins with an initial round of tracks that are little more than time trials, but it quickly moves into full races with other characters, drones, and various other obstacles thrown in as chaos factors. Running along each track is a red power rail, and staying close to the rail gives your ship additional power to fly faster than it ordinarily would. It's tricky, because the rail doesn't always stay straight and narrow, often curving around with a life of its own, and most of the obstacles are, predictably, located near the rail. The tracks themselves range from completely closed caverns (the beginner levels) to largely open contorting tracks. Despite this, players aren't limited to the width of the track, and it is possible (at times even necessary) to completely leave the track.

Sha'a half metal and ain't waaring much — if that'a tha kind of girl you want to bring homa to Mothar, than check out *Steel Harbingar*

Equal parts fast racing and spinning nausea: it'a *StarWinder*

The soundtrack is excellent and could have easily fit into a big screen sci-fi flick, while the audio samples of lasers firing, explosions, and ship fly-bys are of a similarly high quality. Although the premise of an intergalactic race is adequate and the abundant texture maps are pretty, the control of the ships and play mechanics simply aren't varied or engaging enough to hold one's attention for very long.
Rating: ★★★

Steel Harbinger
Publisher: Mindscape
Developer: Mindscape

Rarely do shoot 'em ups effectively combine storyline and action, but *Steel Harbinger* has a plot that actually enhances gameplay rather than just serve as an excuse to blow things up (although, when all is said and done, the object of the game is still to blow things up — no one ever said that wasn't fun).

In the year 2069, the Earth is being invaded by pods that can transform organic matter into mutant metallic beings bent on destroying humanity. Set in a three-quarter isometric view with a third-person perspective, you are Steel Harbinger, a female half-human, half-steel mutant in a combat G-string who happens to be the only hope for saving humans from annihilation. The selection of weapons is impressive, including a grenade launcher and a plasma

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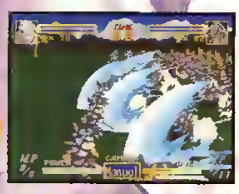

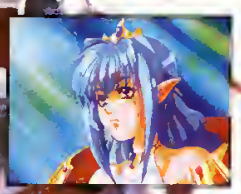

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rifle, although many of the choices seem redundant.

Variety can also be found in the levels, most of which are set in major U.S. cities. The objective in each is roughly the same — save as many humans as possible, activate the Net Node Center, and teleport to another level. However, the designers managed to add unique features to each level, like hopping in a truck to tool around in Houston, or driving a boat around water-logged Los Angeles to find and rescue power plant workers.

Interaction with the 3D environment is fairly extensive. If the character walks around or into a building, the walls become transparent. Branches can be shot from trees and fire hydrants can be burst with a few well-aimed shots. Overall, the fast action adds up to fairly entertaining gameplay well worth a peek or two.

Rating: ★★★

Street Racer

Publisher: UBI Soft
Developer: Vivid Image

Street Racer was originally a 16-bit title, a conscious take on *Mario Kart*. As such, it wasn't bad, but then again, it wasn't great either. In its 32-bit incarnation, however, while having changed very little in concept, it has been upgraded substantially in execution. The result is a game that, like the classic *Micro Machines* (or for that matter, *Mario Kart*), isn't the most technically advanced or groundbreaking title of the season but still manages to be just plain fun.

And it's not as if the developers don't pile on the options: eight cartoonish characters (plus one hidden), 24 tracks (plus three hidden), and multiplayer modes up to eight players in either split screen or "micro mode," a top-down view reminiscent of *Micro Machines*, in which a car that falls behind the others is automatically moved back into the pack (at a penalty, of course). The controls are smooth and intuitive, the animation is sprite-based but fluid, and the tracks are devious and challenging. In short, there's little here you've never played before, but there's a lot of it, and it's put together extremely well.

Rating: ★★★★

Tempest X

Publisher: Interplay
Developer: High Voltage Software

Occasionally, a timeless gaming concept announces its presence, and *Tempest* is, without a doubt, one of them. Psychedelic master Jeff Minter dusted off this classic for the Atari Jaguar in 1994, and *Tempest 2000* almost single-handedly sustained the failing system for almost a year.

There's not much that's new, but *Street Racer* sure is fun

Now High Voltage Software has upped the adrenaline factor again with the PlayStation conversion, *Tempest X*. The game has a number of graphical enhancements including light-sourced, animated, texture-mapped webs, new enemies, a remixed Redbook audio soundtrack, some entirely new tracks, new power-ups, and more. At the same time the trippy, melt-o-vision and pixel-shatter effects that were so groundbreaking on the Jaguar have been retained.

As with the original, the frantic pace of the game all but puts the player in a trance. Control is responsive, and replay value very high with literally dozens of levels. Games may be saved via a "key," enabling players to continue at the last odd level they completed. Add a paddle controller and a coin box, and *Tempest X* could still stand proudly in any arcade.

Rating: ★★★★

Tobal No. 1

Publisher: Sony CE
Developer: Dreem Factory

It isn't often that a new game establishes itself as a major player in an established genre, but that is precisely what *Tobal No. 1* has accomplished with its innovative gameplay and unique graphic approach.

Although the character design in *Tobal No. 1* isn't as readily appealing as those in the *Street Fighter* or *Virtua Fighter* series, each of the fighters possesses a particular fighting style that's perfectly complemented by an original control interface that is instinctive, yet challenging.

Moves are initiated by an elegant combination of directional taps and button inputs that enable the character to jump, block, hold, throw, and attack. An in-depth counter system even allows for reversals that are influenced by such factors as angle of attack and the actual physical makeup of the opponent. As if these elements weren't enough, *Tobal No. 1* also allows for unrestricted movement in the game's 3D environment by the player's choice on the directional pad. The entire control interface is simple, intuitive, and brilliant. There is little to complain about in regards to *Tobal No. 1*, but the computer AI in one-player mode is relatively simple and doesn't come close to matching the entertainment value provided by two-player battles.

The unique approach displayed in *Tobal*'s gameplay is also mirrored in the approach taken for the game's graphics. Instead of following the popular trend of featuring fully rendered,

Smooth and fast and no textures — *Tobal No. 1* has a real kick

texture-mapped characters, the developers of *Tobal* instead opted for flat-shaded graphics and high resolution, seamless 60fps animation. The result may look somewhat Spartan, but the trade-off is gameplay that is the epitome of smoothness.

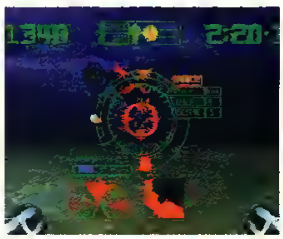
Rating: ★★★★

Saturn

Krazy Ivan

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Paygnosis

Not one of Psygnosis's best efforts even on the PlayStation, *Krazy Ivan* for the Saturn is the perfect middle-of-the-road title. The emphasis of this first-person shooter is on battling one or two larger mechs at a time, as opposed to the swarming beasties of typical *Doom*-style games, and in this the game shows some promise. Battling single foes does enable the game to successfully implement different fighting styles for each



First-person shooting in a barren wasteland is pretty much the extent of Krazy Ivan's appeal.

of the enemies. Where the action falls short, however, is in the barren and repetitive nature of the environments. Though the map-screen would have you believe you are traveling all over the world to do battle, each exotic location inevitably ends up looking a lot like the surface of the moon. On balance, the game never makes it over the hump of mediocrity.

Compared to the original PlayStation version, *Krazy Ivan* for the Saturn is a reasonably close port, but, as usual, the graphics

"Whoa man, I'm peakin' again... Uh oh... Hang on... Wait a minute... Everything's okay. Turns out I'm just playing *Tempest X*... No problem..."

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Saturn

SNAKES ALIVE

More than just "*Virtua Fighter* with strange characters," *Fighting Vipers* is top notch

Fighting Vipers
Publisher: Sega
Developer: AM2

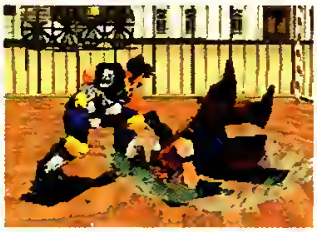
Considering the success Sega achieved with *Virtua Fighter 2*, *Fighting Vipers* has the unenviable challenge of being the follow-up to what many considered to be the greatest fighting game of all time. In fact, initial impressions of those who have played *Fighting Vipers* often is "It's *VF2* with weirder characters." But the cookie-cutter is one tool that the AM2 development team has little familiarity with, and despite similarities to *VF2*, *Fighting Vipers* boasts a plethora of added gameplay elements and strategic possibilities that gives the game a character all its own.

Graphically, *Fighting Vipers* lacks some crispness and detail that marked the remarkable console conversion of *Virtua Fighter 2*. But *Fighting Vipers* does boast true light-sourcing, which gives the game a grittier, edgier appearance over *VF2*'s clean, almost cartoonish graphics, and pushes the Saturn to the edge of its capabilities. What has not been compromised in the conversion to the home is the amazingly smooth animation of the characters.

But what truly distinguishes *Fighting Vipers* is its depth of gameplay. As opposed to *VF2*, every character in *Fighting Vipers* has the ability to move out of the plane of battle and into the 3D environment. Ring outs are replaced with walls that add a whole new dimension to strategy by letting players inflict additional damage by slamming opponents into them, and some characters have the ability to climb the wall to initiate special moves. As if that weren't enough, there are numerous enhancements in *Fighting Vipers* that augment the already spectacular *VF2*-based control interface. Mid-air throws, unique wall-utilizing attacks, ground attacks, reversals, power-up attacks, and, of course, body armor (and special armor destroying attacks) are just a few of the elements that mark the intense and punishing nature of the gameplay in *Fighting Vipers*.

Any complaints about *Fighting Vipers* can be considered nit-picky at best. The single-player game is just a tad easy, and the number of characters is merely adequate as opposed to generous. But all in all, *Fighting Vipers* is a game that adds to an already impressive gameplay foundation. The ultimate crime would be for this title to be overshadowed by the reputation of its predecessor. Mark our words, *VF2* is one of the best games of all time, but *Fighting Vipers* nearly eclipses it.

Rating: ★★★★★



The armor and enclosed rings add new, unique strategic elements

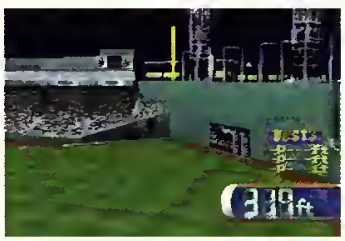
Saturn

BASES COVERED

World Series Baseball II
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sega (Japan)

This follow up to last years groundbreaking *World Series Baseball* could have been either a major disappointment, or simply the same game with new stats. Thankfully, it's neither. *WSBII* features every major league stadium (up from four last year) and each one looks perfect. Even the buildings in the skyline have been perfectly recreated. The amazing detail makes each new park you play in a new experience. There simply isn't a baseball game anywhere that looks this good.

As for the play, the arcade-style pitching is back but has been toned down considerably. You can no longer move a pitch in two directions, and the amount of curve isn't nearly as unrealistic. The only major error from the original *WSB* for the Saturn that didn't get completely corrected is the complete inability to get a double or triple — even a ball in the gap still doesn't guarantee a double.



The Green Monster and all the league stadiums are captured like never before

No this isn't a picture from the ALCS, it's actual gameplay! Mighty impressive and a sheer joy

There's no baseball game that looks, plays, or feels as good as *WSB II*. The graphics are so crisp and clean that it makes the competitors look like 16-bit games. The two-player game is incredible and, while the one-player game may lack some sim options, the speed of play enables you to get through a season without becoming bored. A must for any baseball fan, *WSB II* is at the top of this year's baseball line-up.

Rating: ★★★★★

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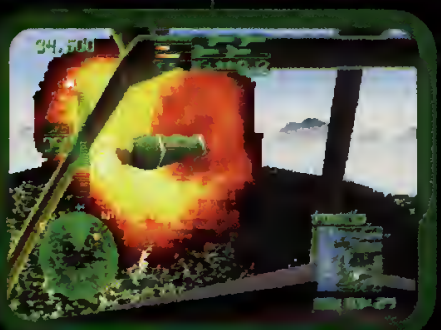

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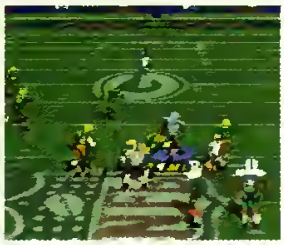
are not quite as sharp and the special effects have been modified (or perhaps it's more accurate to say down-graded). The gameplay, however, is still as sharp as ever, making this a respectable but unexciting game for the Saturn library.
Rating: ★★

Quarterback Club '97
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Iguana
Clearly the graphics don't compare favorably with *Madden '97* or *Gameday*, but they are a huge improvement on last year's version. The problem is that the players are extremely pixilated in both the Saturn and PlayStation versions, but at least the



***Quarterback Club* is good, but not good enough for the majors**

PlayStation version has brighter colors. The developers also spent almost no time on the presentation of the game, which is something *Madden '97* has perfected. The last and most crucial problem with *QBC '97* is the slow gameplay. Compared to *Madden '97*, it looks like the players are running underwater.

Although the slowed play prevents *QBC '97* from being the best football game of the year, it is without a doubt the most important game of the year. The advances made in tackling are astonishing and should be in every football game. The players don't just run into each other and then lie on the ground; instead the players actually wrap their arms around the ball-carriers and drag them to the ground. And what's even more amazing is that it's not the same animation each time, it depends on what part of the body the tackle is made at and the momentum of the players.

Throw in the ability to play as any player on the team, numbers on the jerseys, and some impressive AI, and you have what is the best one-player football game available. However, until the developers can speed up play and clean up the graphics, *QBC* isn't the compelling two-player experience that *Madden '97* is.
Rating: ★★★

Street Fighter Alpha 2
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
If there's one thing the Saturn can do especially well (even better than the PlayStation and N64, in fact), it's 2D fighting

***Capcom's Street Fighter Alpha 2* is the same thing, only better**

games. Combine this cozy technological environment with Capcom's long history of expertise in the field and you're likely to come up with yet another exceptional 2D fighting experience. This is, of course, the case with the latest installment of the *Street Fighter Alpha* series.

The most significant enhancement made by this sequel to a prequel is the introduction of a custom combo system. Beyond the traditionally sound combo system in use in all the *Street Fighter* games, this new feature enables players to jump into what can only be described as "super-hyper" mode during which they can unload a string of moves sure to rattle even the most advanced players.

Outside of the custom combo system and a few other minor enhancements, the game is pretty much just more of a good thing, but at least it's that. The animation is top-notch, the characters are extremely well-balanced, and the action is as fast as you'd ever want it to be. If you're a fan of the series, you probably didn't wait around to read this review anyway, and if you're not yet a fan, it may be about time you become one.
Rating: ★★★★

3D Baseball
Publisher: TBA
Developer: Crystal Dynamics
The second and most recent sports title from Crystal Dynamics may not be the best baseball game on the market, but *3D Baseball* does contribute significantly to the genre. For the first time in a baseball game, the polygon players look real (with the exception of the skinny forearms), and the motion-capture really lends credibility to the idea of a polygonal baseball game. Seeing Jose Canseco step to the plate with his real stance is something we should start seeing in every baseball game. Other great animations like catching the ball and sweeping down for a tag are the best we've seen.

Unfortunately, beyond the technological advancements, *3D Baseball* is just an average game. The four phony stadiums are solid, but the play is a little slow and the simulation value can't compare with front-runners like *Triple Play '97*.
Rating: ★★★

PC

Circle of Blood
Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment
Developer: Revolution
George Stobbart is an innocent American tourist, out enjoying the wonders of Paris when he is literally rocked by an explosion at the café where he's enjoying his afternoon coffee. As he investigates the explosion, the subsequent adventure changes the course of not only his life, but history.

The graphics are beautiful, hand-drawn by artists formerly of Don Bluth's studio, the outfit responsible for *All Dog's go to Heaven* and laserdisc arcade games *Dragon's Lair* and *Space Ace*. The ten-layer cel animation is fantastic, and character movements, scrolling, and cinematic cut-scenes are all a joy to watch. Much care has been put into integrating cut scenes with game play, and the player moves seamlessly from one to the other, with neither jarring breaks in the action nor major changes in graphic style or quality — a nice touch more designers should emulate.

The story is rich in mystery and intrigue, taking the player all over Europe and into the Middle East. It involves the Knights Templar (a mystical religious order founded during the Crusades), some nasty killers, and more than few puzzles.

And that's where the game falls a little flat. The interface is simple, which is a good thing, but in general so are the puzzles. One or two may take you by surprise, but most are standard graphic adventure fare — find the object, use the object on something else. Still, while *Circle of Blood* may not be the toughest graphic adventure out there, its story and graphics make it well worth playing.
Rating: ★★★★

Links LS
Publisher: Access
Developer: Access
Links 386 has long dominated the PC golf market, but over the last year or so, it was beginning to show its age. However, Access hasn't remained idle; the release of *Links LS* — what was to be named Links Pentium — has put

With *Links LS*, Accolade is once again leading the pack

them once again at the top of the PC golfing heap.

Links LS is a tour de force of PC graphics, able to support screen resolutions of 1600x1200 or higher and up to 16.7 million colors. You don't have to play in these resolutions of course, and in

In *Circle of Blood*, weird things start to happen right from the beginning with a massive, deadly explosion in a French café

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1 to 2 player game unless used with 6player adaptor

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PC

THE BOX STOPS HERE

The Pandora Directive

Publisher: Access Software
Developer: Access Software

Tex Murphy is back, and in this six-CD, four-gigabyte video adventure, you can rest assured that there's a whole lot more gameplay than in *Under A Killing Moon*, the first title in the series. This time, an all-star cast joins creator Chris Jones. For a CD-ROM title, this is one impressive group of actors: John Agar, of *Fort Apache* fame, joins Kevin McCarthy (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*), Tanya Roberts (*Sheena, Queen of the Jungle*), and Barry Corbin, the lovable Maurice Minnifield from "Northern Exposure."

The detail of the game is astounding, from the lush furnishings to the starry skyline

Perhaps surprisingly, the game itself is impressive as well. The three-dimensional interface is smooth, although it takes a bit of getting used to. The story is well-written, with sight-gags as well as some more subtle humor to add laughs to the suspense. There are two play modes; Entertainment and Game Players. In Entertainment mode, players have access to hints and can even bypass a particularly difficult puzzle. The Game Players mode allows no cheating and even throws in a few extra puzzles.

These puzzles, however, are the single biggest fault of the game. Some of them are just too difficult, requiring unbelievable stretches of imagination and leaps in logic to find the solution. It's highly unlikely any player will finish the game without consulting the hint guide at least once.

However, the rush of success after solving a difficult puzzle is almost — almost — worth the effort. *The Pandora Directive* mixes humor, adventure, and action into a well-crafted and well-acted whole. Adventure gamers couldn't ask for anything more.

Rating: ★★★★

If puzzles get too difficult, such as the Black Moon, it's possible to skip it by choosing to play in Entertainment Mode

This here's Tex Murphy. He may not be much to look at, but he gets the job done

fact most people can't, but this does mean the game's graphics will be viable through several hardware upgrade cycles.

Furthermore, *Links LS* supports and upgrades all the many popular add-on disks that were available for *Links 386*. Millions of these bonus courses were sold, so *Links LS* users won't have to wait for new courses because dozens are already available. And it gives golf fans a strong incentive to pick up *Links LS* as opposed to the competition.

Other features include customizable sound files and a variety of play modes from stroke play to skins; future add-on disks will feature new motion-captured golfers, new courses, and video tours of golf resorts.

Probably the biggest knock against *LS* is its steep system requirements: you'll want at a bare minimum a P90 with 16MB of RAM and a 2MB video card. But for the well-equipped golf fan, it doesn't get any better.

Rating: ★★★★

The Neverhood

Publisher: Dreamworks Interactive
Developer: The Neverhood

What do you get when you take Gumby and add a bunch of point-and-click puzzles? You get *The Neverhood*, a graphic adventure that, while it tries really hard for laughs, is more often than not ground to a halt by the puzzles that make it a game.

The interface is completely point and click, with no inventory or score to deal with. Most of the game is solving puzzles, from the slide-the-tile, *Myst*-like affairs to some more creative, and usually explosive, challenges, all in the service of guiding a gangly, strangely tubular-headed character named Klayton through a series of adventures. The graphics are indeed stunning — the design work is unique and inventive to say the least, and these oddly-shaped clay characters really come to life on the monitor. As long as you have at least the minimum Pentium 75, it runs beautifully.

While graphically stunning, *The Neverhood* doesn't quite deliver

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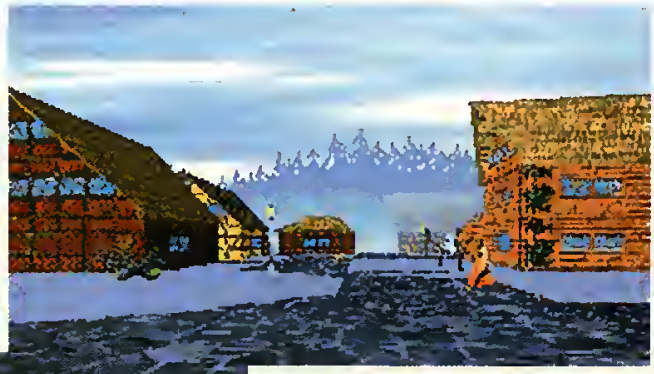

Conversations are (above) created by choosing from a list of words and a tone of speaking. Fairly clunky at first, it becomes more streamlined when you get the hang of it. The towns (right) really make *Daggerfall* shine, especially since you can jump from roof to roof just for kicks

Daggerfall enables you to create your own character. You can even custom-create a new profession

THE OLDEST

The Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall
Publisher: Bethesda Softworks
Developer: Bethesda Softworks

Well, it's been almost three years in the making, not the record for this industry, but plenty long enough. The obvious question is, was it worth waiting for? The opening screens aren't exactly auspicious: the character creation system is similar to its predecessor *The Elder Scrolls: Arena*, although there are more options to enable players to more fully tailor game personas to their liking. Also, when the game starts, the first dungeon players face might seem a bit underwhelming — after all, the textures on the walls were mostly created three years ago, and they show their age.

But start moving around. Kill a few creatures with a smooth stroke of the mouse. Hit that M key for an automap of the dungeon, and check out the fully 3D map. It takes some getting used to, but with a little practice, you'll read dungeons like a book.

And once you get to a city, the graphics don't look nearly so primitive. Buildings are everywhere. Hundreds of people, with their own names and professions, wander the landscape. They all have a purpose in the world and will speak to you in their own personal way. As you explore *Daggerfall*, you'll discover the world is whole, complete, self-contained, and fully detailed. Rumor has it that development finally ended only because the designers reached the limit of game data that could be stored on a single CD-ROM disk — this is a *big* world. The beta testers must have bought No-Doz by the case.

Pointing out flaws is pure nit-picking: how come you don't tie your horse up when you dismount? How come there's no text-parser interface to let you ask characters about specific names or places not on the keyword list? But given that no computer game can completely mimic the ins and outs of real life, *Daggerfall* comes as close as anything ever has, and contains an exciting, heroic, suspenseful, and above all else, entertaining story. It's a testament to the game, however, that you may or may not follow the story as you wish. Instead, simply carve a niche for yourself out of the world and live it. If you've been one of the many gamers waiting for the world of *Tamriel* to come alive again, the wait is over. And it is, hands down, worth it.

Rating: ★★★★★

Get used to these dungeons. A lot of adventuring is spent prowling dark places like this one. "Like *Doom* except?" you ask? Sort of a thinking men's *Doom*

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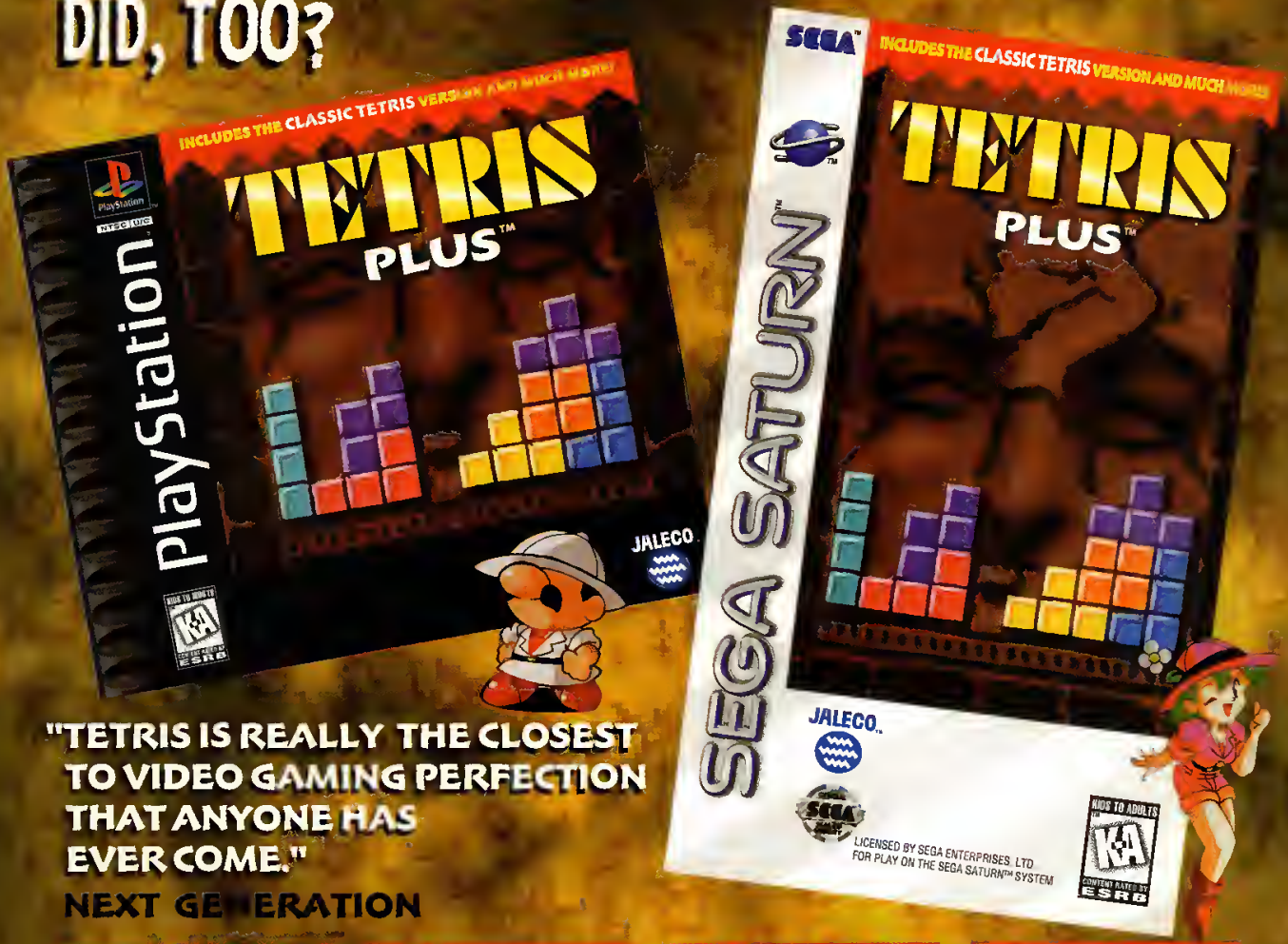

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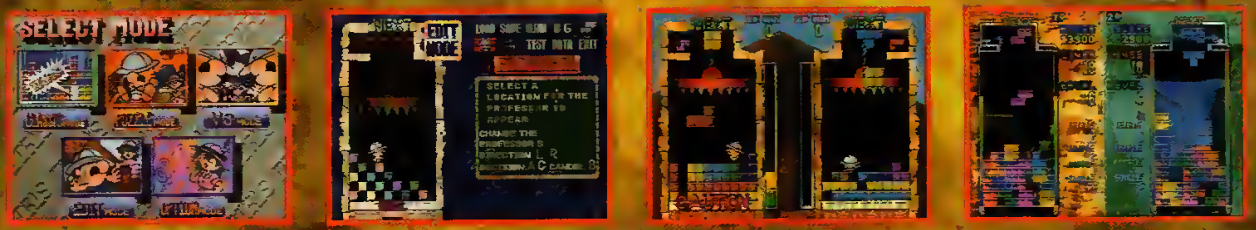

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rating arcade

Without a doubt, *The Neverhood* is a breakthrough in computer game art — it's a world apart, with no real antecedants on PC, and a nice break from the glut of medieval fantasy and sci-fi backgrounds that normally mark gaming. It's also very slowly paced, and the puzzles just aren't exciting enough to carry it all the way through.
Rating: ★★★

NHL '97
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: EA Sports
The best-looking, fastest-moving, hardest-hitting hockey game on the PC is without a doubt *NHL '97*. This latest triumph from EA Sports features motion-captured, polygon-modeled characters that are unbelievably realistic. They shake their sticks, throw punches, and slam into each other like so many bowling pins skidding across the ice. And the game moves fast too — sometimes so fast, you can barely keep your eye on the puck.

Control is simple and intuitive, and the selection of views will please even the most finicky player. Season and exhibition play, multiple difficulty levels, even player creation — it's all there. You can set penalties, or even turn off icing and offsides if you want a really fast game. And with a Gravis GRiP system, eight players can play on two computers. Players tire, and the teams definitely play at their ability level — the Detroit Red Wings and the other good teams look like they know what they're doing, while the San Jose Sharks look like, well, the San Jose Sharks, floundering about helplessly.

EA Sports's *NHL '97* is easily the best hockey game for PC

The fighting sequences are impressive at first glance, but the players punch too slowly and unimaginatively to get worked up about this. Maybe in the next go-round EA will add in a mini-fighting game, and the blood will really fly.

The rules of hockey are easy to learn, particularly in a game like this. So if you've been looking for a good PC hockey game, look no further than *NHL '97*.
Rating: ★★★★

Arcade

Arcade

COMIC

X-Men Vs. Street Fighter
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Reaching into its rich 2D palette of fighting games, Capcom has possibly created one of the least original games it's developed in a long while, *X-Men Vs. Street Fighter*. It's best just to say that this game is a weird blend of fighting styles, with unexpected results.

Employing the CPS2 board for the umpteenth time and maximizing its animation qualities and speed, the developers at Capcom have enabled two-player tag-team fights with choices of 17 players (eight X-Men and eight *Street Fighter* characters, plus surprise character Akura) in a game that weighs in favor of playing more like *X-Men: Children of the Atom* than *SF Alpha II*. In fact, playing *X-Men Vs. Street Fighter* is like playing *Street Fighter Alpha* on the strongest of steroids. Ken and Ryu are now able to Dragon Punch 15 feet off the ground; their fireballs are huge and damaging, while massive 15-hit aerial combos are the norm. This aspect is nicely enforced by the tag-team aspect that supports a wide variety of players as well as seeking out the opposing characters' weaknesses. But this game may put off *SF* purists, because it leans more heavily toward the whirlwind button-mashing so prevalent in *X-Men*.

New attack variations are also prevalent: hyper combos, advancing guards (and reciprocal guard breaks), Fusion Combos and Counters. The subtle Counters break characters free from super attacks, while the Fusion Combos are loud and damaging — both characters appear on screen at once for a full onslaught of projectile force.

X-Men Vs. Street Fighter is a fun game, but it's just a bit of an overdose of the kind of game of which we've already played way too much.
Rating: ★★★

Cammy Vs. Juggernaut (top)? It could happen... Capcom's merch in the direction of bigger and more explosive projectiles continues — enjoy it if you really feel the need (above)

Macintosh

Infocom Masterpieces
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Infocom
Once again, Activision has re-released a "complete" collection of Infocom text adventures. Technically, it isn't complete: Activision replaced the colorful manuals with e-documents right on the CD — score one for the environment and one against ease of use. Also, *Shogun* is still missing, although since it's universally regarded as having sucked, that's no great loss. However, with *Arthur: The Quest for Excalibur* and *Journey* finally making the leap onto CD-ROM, this collection can be considered functionally comprehensive

This hybrid CD, which works on both PC and Mac, simply represents the pinnacle of well written, interactive fiction. If you want *deep* gameplay and want to see what adventure games could be (they certainly aren't at this level today), you want this disc. It has 32 games, promising 1,200 hours of gameplay (minimum) — not bad. And neither are the six additional bonus titles — original games that were winners of an annual Interactive Fiction contest held on the net. Very cool, and a gamer's must-have.
Rating: ★★★★★

SORRY!

No new games were made available for review this month on the following systems

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- 3DO
- Genesis
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- Super NES

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Mystery Word Grid

	H					
		E				
P	I	N	C	H	W	MYSTERY WORD
	R					
S						

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

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BREAK .....Z	PUNCH .....S	SPRAY C	TURBO.....V
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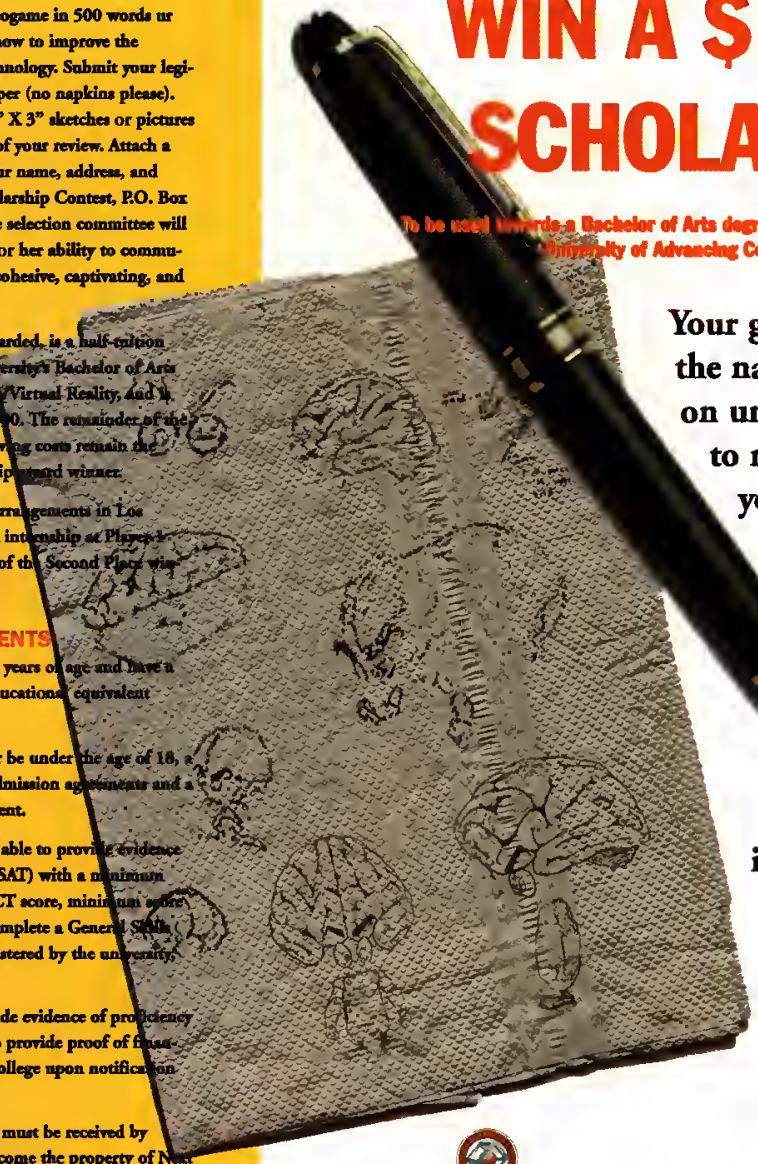

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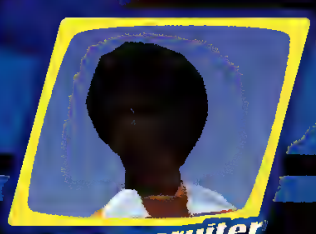

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letters

Everyday is a read letter day

I cannot believe the comments made by Mr. Yamauchi of Nintendo on pg. 30 of **NG 20**. Maybe something was lost in the translation: "Most of the users who have bought 32-bit machines for ($280 to $370), I believe, were older game players with their own money to spend. But we won't be making any money by going after those users. Nintendo will target younger users, elementary school or junior high school students, who can't buy games with their own money."

Nintendo's Mr. Yamauchi is after your children. No, really

Does this comment make sense to anybody? How can you gear a $250 game system with $70+ games to kids who would be just as happy running through a sprinkler in the front yard?

Linda Ryan
Laud23@gnn.com

But this is exactly the same strategy that got Nintendo where it is today — with $5 billion in the bank, just in case.

Didn't the same situation that is currently happening with Nintendo 64 and *Super Mario 64* happen with the Super NES and *Super Mario World*? Didn't Shigeru Miyamoto, his big budget, non-stop development team, and his great imagination create the best Mario game to date when the Super NES came out? And when the Super Nintendo did come out, wasn't it the "most expensive console on the block"? Correct me if I'm wrong.

farrell@newtech.net

Yup, to a certain extent you're right. But many other big games — such as *Ghouls 'n' Goblins*, *F-Zero*, and *PilotWings* — accompanied the Super NES's launch phase. Nintendo 64 is relying on Mario far more than the Super NES had to.

I don't belive anyone hasn't figured this out yet: (e)nos backwards is son(e). "e" separated to be read as the letter E such as the "r u ready" slogan with ready depicted with a red "e". Sony lives. Wow.

jquirin@textron.com

OK, but what about...

I don't think that "e-nos lives" refers to the bible. If you turn the two words around, you get "son-e sevil". Move the space and spell it right, and you get "sonys evil". Hmm.....even if it isn't "evil", e-nos most likely stands for sony. Why else would there be a dash right in the middle of the word?

Michael Gladstone
gladston@svpal.org

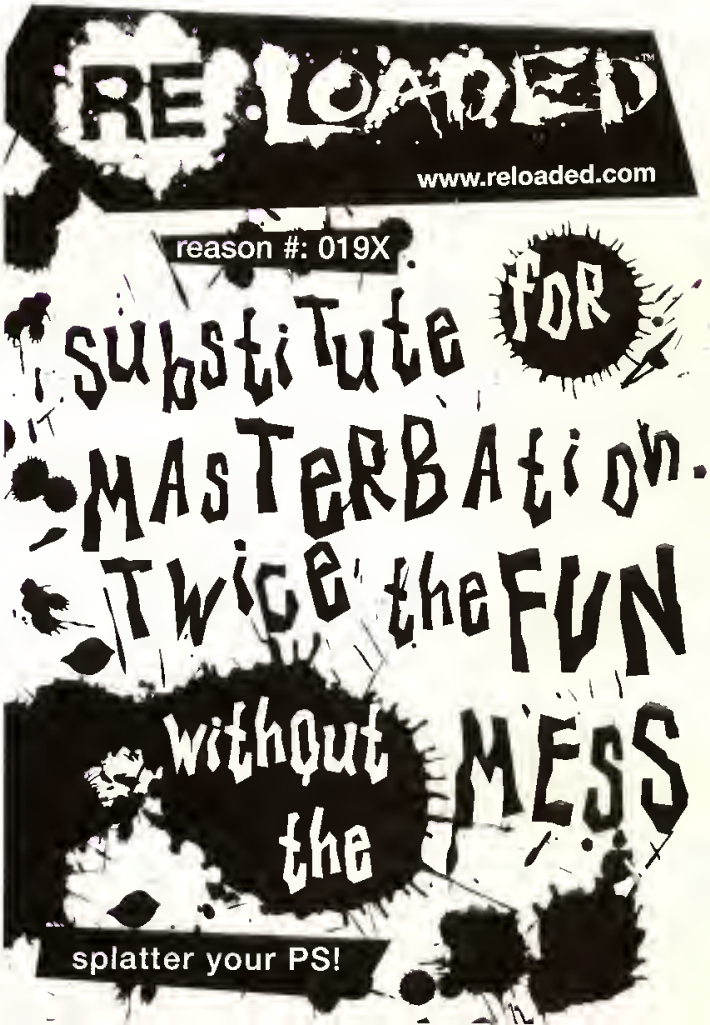
Does anyone else have anything to say? Or is that finally it?

I thought the Gallery in the September issue (**NG 21**) was great. I loved the art work involved in creating games. I hope you continue to use the Gallery to show more video game art.

Jonathan Allen
joallen@s1.montcalm.cc.mi.us

We're happy to oblige. Check out pages 97 through 102 for more of the Gallery.

Computer simulation games have become very popular. The *Gettysburg* simulation, *Nascar*, *IndyCar* simulators, and *SimCity* to name a few. What all these games have in common is their intent to be as real as possible and also to educate and entertain. Recently, a simulation has been published by Interplay called *Canquest of the New World*. One might assume the



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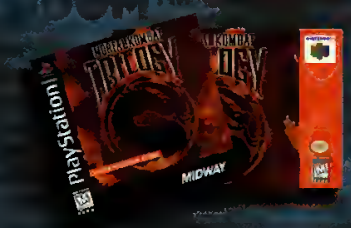

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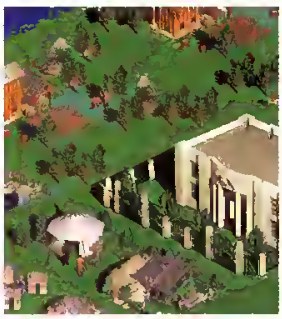
game to be historically accurate and tell of the horrors of the "explorers." However, such an assumption would be wrong *Conquest*, a word which one of its meanings is "to vanquish," is guilty of sweetening history so that it may be packaged and sold as a game.

We all know now that the once celebrated explorers were not as heroic as was once taught in school. However, the introduction of *Conquest* is full of pomp and circumstance and glorifies the role of these "explorers." *Conquest* states that there was a time full of superstition when Europe brought the world out of the dark ages and into the age of enlightenment. People now realized the world was round and the mythical serpents that guarded the ends of the earth disappeared and the explorers and "empire builders" were born. Nothing is ever mentioned about the genocide perpetrated by these so-called enlightened people.

Out of the several hundred nations that lived on Turtle Island, Interplay has chosen to represent Native Americans as three tribes: Hostile, Neutral, and Peaceful. Not only do the tribes and the people remain nameless, they are all clothed in stereotypical clothing and all live in Plains tipis. The land is randomly generated so there is not even historical relevance there either. There is no attempt at showing any battle strategies on either side, and the battlefield is like a tic-tac-toe board that is played like the childhood game of capture the flag. The explorer side has the flag of their country and the Native American side has a hoop with an animal skin string up inside it with feathers hanging down at the base of the hoop.

When the player's explorer encounters a tribe, he is given the option to either "Destroy," "Send Missionary," or leave them alone. When you find a Neutral or a Peaceful tribe, you may also trade with them. You can select "destroy" when you meet any of the tribes. Another example of their sweetening of history is that the player can capture members of other expeditions but may not capture Native Americans. Would people still want to play *Conquest* if Native Americans could be captured as slaves? Probably not. But not playing it is better than whitewashing history.

The battle scenes are unrealistic. The Arawaks and many other tribes were not prepared for the armor, weapons and sheer numbers of these "explorers." So how could this game even be very challenging?



Interplay's *Conquest*: Innocent fun, or a distortion of history?

Columbus wrote in his own logs, "I should be judged as a captain who went from Spain to the Indies to conquer a people numerous and warlike, whose manners and religion are very different from ours..." This is who the players of *Conquest* turn into.

Perhaps there was no hostile intent while making *Conquest*. However, Interplay's ignorance is appalling. The lure of money has caused Interplay to discard its sense of judgment. How can a company make anything entertaining about genocide in the first place? The age rating for this game is for ages six to adults. Knowing how children nowadays watch movies and play games more than read history books, is this going to be American children's introduction to Native American history? That the Europeans could have been defeated only if Native Americans had played capture the flag better? Interplay has done nothing but glorify these conquistadors. This holocaust must not be clouded; otherwise, it is as if it never happened.

Morgan Hastings
Morgan_Hastings/Papyrus.
PAPYRUS@papy.com

Interplay? Your response?

In regards to jason_p_block@amoco.com's letter about an arcade type joystick for a the PlayStation, my friend and I just finished building a game controller that works with the PS-X. We built the controller to be exactly like the arcade controls for the arcade games *Robotron* and *Defender*. But what's really cool is that we set up switches so you can use two joysticks for *Robotron*, and then one joystick and the exact buttons for *Defender*. If you give me a mailing address (your work and your home), I can send you a photo if you want. It's pretty cool and took only a day to make.

Peter H. Pang
Alias|Wavefront
ppang@aw.sgi.com

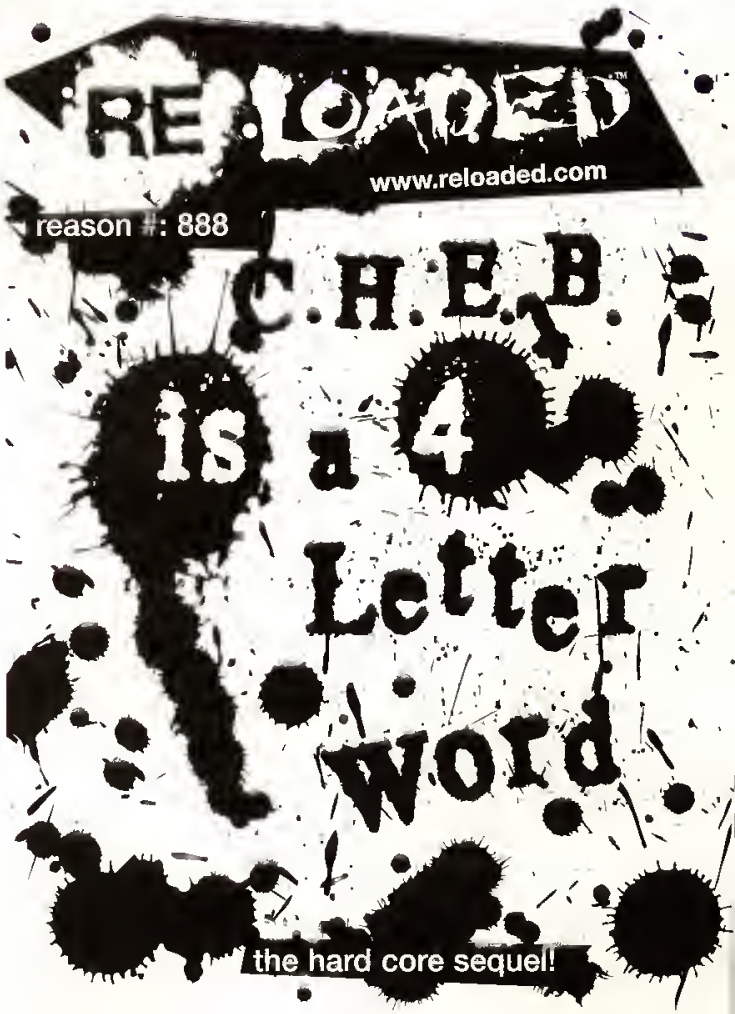
Good to see another satisfied customer.

In **NG 21** did you guys rate *AH-64D Longbow* with five stars or with only four? It shows five stars, but they are black and not the usual red color

Tim Grauerholz
PipBulls@aol.com

Oops. Yup, *AH-64D Longbow* got five full stars (and yup, they should have been red).

In **NG 21**, you answered that you thought I was being a little sensitive about swearing in videogames.



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HOW MANY GAMES HAVE YOU PURCHASED IN THE PAST YEAR? _____

ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY DECEMBER 15, 1996

Well, maybe I am, but I'm definitely not the only one. Or, maybe it's the other way around. From the letters I got, it seems as though your side seems sensitive about losing your precious swear words. All but one ended up being the type of letter where I get cussed out while being called immature and babyish, and that's it. No reasons, no explanations, nothing but that.

Maybe your audience, or at least the people who support you, aren't as mature as you believe they are. I really don't mean to offend anyone, but all of this contradicting stuff just helps to prove my point.

All I want to get across to these companies is that there are profits being lost here, just because of something that is easily changed. There are simple substitutions here. Anyway, thanks for printing my first letter, and I send out a thank you to everyone who sent me their opinion, even to those who are against me, because, if anything, it made my own position stronger.

Timothy Kish
SilverHkl1@aol.com

We respect your opinions Timothy, and we are well aware of the ignorant, juvenille minority who saw fit to respond aggressively to you. Unfortunately, someone making a stand (such as yourself) invariably attracts such attention.

I must say that the use of phrases such as "blow the living shit out of your enemies" (**NG 19**, p. 90) is not necessary and detracts from the valuable content given. My overall opinion on the quality of your magazine is lowered with every issue. Please do what you can to correct this problem.

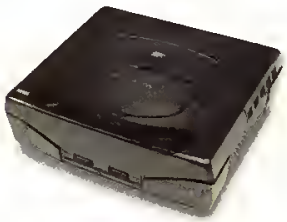
Philippe Zautke
<philz@primenet.com

OK, this debate has been going on for a while now. So let's sort it out once and for all. **Next Generation** is aimed at the older, more sophisticated gamer, and it is our belief that the vast majority of **Next Generation** readers appreciate being treated as the adults that they are — and that this occasionally does include adult languge.

What do you think? If the vast majority of correspondence over the next few weeks demands that we remove such language, then we shall.

When it first came out, Sega was advertising the Saturn as having two 32-bit processors. You guys even mentioned twin Hitatchi SH-2s. Just recently, however, I saw a commercial that then said that Saturn had three 32-bit processors! Did Saturn get revamped, or what?

Terry&Mary Ellen Foust
75630.3235@compuserve.com



Sega Saturn — how many processors does it really have?

No, Sega's advertising agency is using what it can to get a jump on PlayStation and Nintendo 64 in its TV ads. Although Saturn does contain these components, the company essentially compares apples to oranges in its TV ads. These extra components don't necessarily make it more powerful.

Indeed, although all companies do this, Sega is probably the worst of the videogame bunch. We're sure many of you will remember that when Saturn first launched, callers to the Saturn 1-800 Information line were told that "really, Saturn is a 128-bit machine" — because this was the number you got if you "added up" all its components.

Unfortunately, this kind of practise is unlikely to disappear.

I am writing this letter because I wanted to express my concern about Luigi. In all the Nintendo 64s reviews and previews, I have not once heard the name Luigi spoken once in any of them. I mean, Mario and Luigi are like "peas and carrots", you can't have a Mario game without Luigi! So where is he?

Vinny
103527.1106@compuserve.com

P.S. Your list of 100 games was right on. I wouldn't change a single title.

It's strange, but we haven't heard anything about Luigi either. Nintendo's not talking, and on the subject responds with what can only be described as a "stony" silence.

I was reading **NG 21** today, specifically the "Joyriding" article written by Bernard Yee. After reading his summary that states that advertising may pay the way for online gamers (since advertisers would cover operating expenses), I was surprised that **Next Generation** isn't free, considering the amount of ads in it.

Yale Evans
yevans@mcs.net

Because, of course, we have paper, print, distribution, transport, and retailer mark-up costs that web sites don't incur.

Wow — what an issue! Now, many mags wouldn't have dared to put out an issue rating the top 100 games of all times. Over all I liked it.

John Sweeney
jsween@osprey.unf.edu

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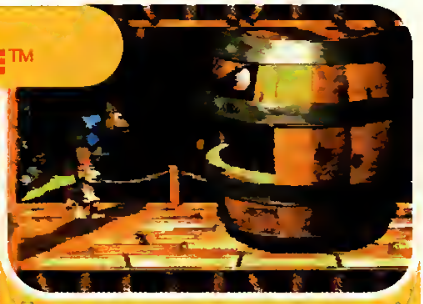

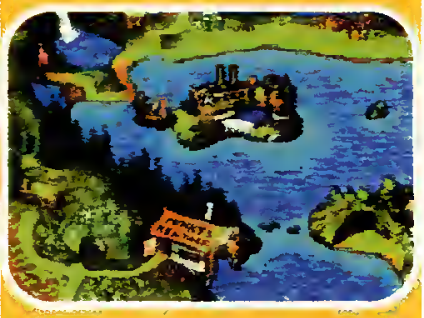

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Next Generation #25
on sale December 17, 1996.

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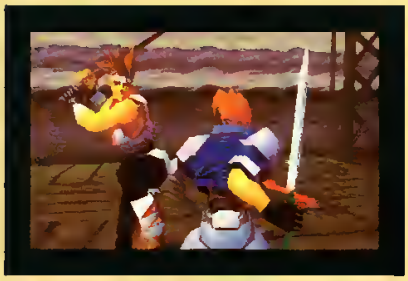

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29 New GAMES PREVIEWED

Your essential look at the hot new games you'll be playing tomorrow, on Sega Saturn, Nintendo 64, PC, and PlayStation

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